THE RICE INSTITUTE

OWEN PINKNEY PYLE,
CHAMPION OF THE FARMER

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

Houston, Texas

April, 1958

Approved April 25, 1958
Edward Hake Phillips

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Owen Pinkney Pyle
(1905)

INTRODUCTION

In late summer of 1888 a tall, thin, young man gripped the rough top plank of a gate as he stared across a cotton field in Northeast Texas. The promise of early summer had been dissipated by two of Nature's cruel jokes, and now the rows of cotton plants, stunted by drought and riddled by boll worms, dragged their branches in the dust. Here and there a spot of white showed that a valiant boll had somehow managed to develop into fibers, but these were too few and the fluff of fibers too small to justify the effort of picking them.

The young farmer thought of the long hours of labor he had expended on this crop, beginning with spring plowing and harrowing, planting, thinning out the young plants, again chopping out the weeds that sprang up in the cultivated soil. He remembered the blistering August day when he finally admitted to himself that another half-year's work was lost, no rain could save the plants, nothing he tried could kill the boll worms as fast as they multiplied and destroyed.

Gloomily he speculated how his season's efforts would have been rewarded had Nature smiled benignly. He would have spent back-breaking days in the fields picking the cotton; he would have driven his wagon-loads of the white fluff to the nearest gin and, rather than carting the baled cotton home again to hold it for some hoped-for but non-materializing

price increase, he would have sold it to a commission house agent for "the going price," i.e., the price set by the purchasers rather than by the producers. His cotton would have then been sold to the mills for twice what he had received for it.

The youth's memory went back to his earliest experiences of picking cotton as a child of four, and of plowing the heavy soil from his seventh year on. He was strong and the grinding labor under the hot sun was not an intolerable hardship on him, but it was a different matter for his mother and his sisters. His mind tensed with memories of them bending over the cotton rows, straining at the weight of the heavy sacks dragging along the ground as they picked. As with all large and poor families, it was necessary that every member work in order that all might be fed and clothed. There were no luxuries, only the barest necessities.

As he surveyed the lost hopes of his twentieth summer, the young man may have allowed himself a fleeting moment of self-pity, but it was not in his nature to ignore a challenge. He could, indeed, do nothing about the weather. He had faith in the eventual success of scientists who were working to devise ways of combating the boll weevil scourge. That left the human parasites who profited unfairly from the farmer's labor, against whom the lone farmer was helpless. A just system of distribution could be secured, he felt, if enough farm-

ers could be convinced of the necessity of applying business methods to their work. They must form a solid phalanx, setting their own price for the fruits of their labor and holding out until they got it. This would require a gigantic effort in education and co-operation--an agrarian crusade. It would require of the crusader a zealot's faith, the ability to sway others, and a willingness to sacrifice personal interests and health, if necessary, for the cause.

The gawky young farmer pondered these challenges and resolved to devote his life to the cause of the producer.[1]

Who was this obscure youth in patched overalls who, confronted by failure in his latest bid to "make a stake," could look beyond the obstacles of ignorance, prejudice, lethargy, custom, and discrimination that blocked the farmers' path to better living through co-operation?

Owen Pinkney Pyle was his name, this farmboy who was a teacher, then a newspaper publisher, and a life-long worker in the interest of the farmer. Why is there historical

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[1] Texas Farmer, Dallas, Texas, January 20, 1906, reprint of a letter written by O. P. Pyle, dated January 1, 1906, and originally printed in National Co-operator, which Pyle published in Mineola, Texas. A photostat copy of this is Appendix A. The writer (youngest of the eight children born to Owen Pinkney Pyle and Mildred Gibson Pyle) heard this story from her mother many times. Mrs. Pyle wrote a brief biography of her husband in 1930 at the request of Who's Who Publishing Company. A fragment of this paper was found among her personal papers after her death in 1946. In it she refers to "the ruling passion of his life--to do something for the farmer."

interest in tracing his career to discover whether he fulfilled his dream? There were many Texans in the 'nineties and the early years of this century who worked hard to raise the farmer's standard of living, and many of these men published newspapers devoted to this cause. The career of O. P. Pyle included service in each of the agrarian organizations of this period: the Farmers' Alliance, the Populist Party, and later the Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union. In many ways he was typical of his kind, and in his finest accomplishments he stands forth as a subject worthy of study, for he successfully applied the lessons gained from the earlier period to the problems peculiar to the Progressive Era. He was one of the organizers and key promoters of the Texas Farmer's Union, instigator of the National Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union, and its first president. He typified the best in the professional men who strove to help the farmer and was himself a "victim" of the struggle between the "dirt farmer" and the "town man," a struggle which followed the pattern of former agrarian movements and eventually killed the Farmers' Union in Texas. O. P. Pyle almost literally gave his life in this contest, for, after spending his strength prodigally on the cause for many years, the final bitter disillusionment broke his health and he never fully recovered during the ten years that remained of his life.

Two books have been published which tell the story of

the Farmers' Union in its early days in Texas. Charles Simon Barrett, protegé of Pyle and third president of the National Union, wrote from his personal knowledge The Mission, History and Times of the Farmers' Union in 1909[2], and Robert Lee Hunt, Professor of Agricultural Economics at Texas Agricultural & Mechanical College, devoted to the Farmers' Union over half of his one hundred and ninety-two page dissertation, A History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest, 1873-1925[3], which he published in 1935. Dr. Hunt drew information from all of the original charter members of the Farmers' Union then living. These two books and the newspaper files extant are the prime sources for study of the Texas agrarian movement during Pyle's most influential years in it, but they cannot, of course, tell the whole story of his work.

It is the purpose of this thesis to describe O. P. Pyle, his origins and his personality, to review his work and to attempt to evaluate his position in the farmers' crusade.

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[2]Charles Simon Barrett, The Mission, History and Times of the Farmers's Union (Nashville, 1909).

[3]Robert Lee Hunt, A History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest, 1873-1925 (College Station, 1935).

CHAPTER I

Four generations of American farmers stood behind this crusading editor, whose great-great-grandfather, Konrad Poyle, born in Germany in 1745, came to America with his parents at the beginning of the Revolution. From stories that have been passed down from generation to generation, it is more than probable that the fearless Konrad fought for freedom in his new land. After the war ended he settled in eastern North Carolina, where he married in 1785 and began to raise a large family. His name was changed by his neighbors to Coonrod Pile because that is how the German pronunciation of Konrad Poyle sounded to American ears.

Legend has it that this giant gunsmith was a friend of Daniel Boone, that he accompanied Boone on one of his trips across the Blue Ridge Mountains, that he returned later to that uninhabited wilderness, made friends with the Indians, built a cabin, cleared land, and established his family, the first white man to settle in what is now Fentress County in North Central Tennessee. It is a matter of record that he settled in this area in 1791 near where Jamestown was later established, that he remained there all his life, and that he raised five children and amassed a fortune by trading land and by manufacturing guns for the constant stream of immigrants

moving westward.[1]

Tall tales of his fearlessness, his marksmanship, and his amazing strength have made Coonrod Pile a sort of Tennessee Paul Bunyan. He built the first turnpike in Tennessee, a road from Jamestown to Monroe, and set up toll gates. This brought him a handsome income. He owned large tracts of land and thirty-five slaves when he died in 1805 at the age of one hundred and five. William, his third son, took care of him until his death and inherited most of his estate.[2] Coonrad was evidently stronger physically than frontier times in that mountainous area demanded, and equally shrewd in his business ventures.[3]

Coonrod's eldest son, Jacob, was born in North Carolina the year his parents married and was six years old when his father moved the family to Fentress County, Tennessee. He thrived on the strenuous frontier life, learned from his father

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[1]Factual information on Konrad Poyle was taken from the Pyle Family Record Book, a large book of genealogy, which has several pages devoted to biography of Coonrod and the eldest son of each succeeding generation: Jacob, Johnson, and Jesse, the father of O. P. Pyle. The first entries are dated 1888. This book is in the keeping of Dexter O. Cooper of Fort Worth, cousin of the writer.

[2]Coonrod's son, Elisha, had a daughter, Nancy, whose daughter, Mary, was the mother of World War I hero Alvin S. York of Tennessee.

[3]In April, 1936, Perry Princeton Pyle, a cousin of the writer, inquired in Jamestown, Tennessee, whether anyone named Pile or Pyle still lived nearby. He was directed to a mountain cabin where George Pile, an old man, told him many stories of Coonrod's feats. He claimed that Coonrod could sit astride

how to work with iron, and developed mechanical skill. He married Comfort Williams in 1808 and ten years later he and his brother, Daniel, moved their families to farmland in Lawrence County in South Central Indiana on the east fork of the White River. Jacob and Daniel built flatboats and floated their produce to market in the settlements down the river; perhaps they ventured past the juncture of the White with the Wabash, and thence down the Ohio and the Mississippi to Memphis, Natchez, and New Orleans. Jacob was a good hunter and loved to match himself against the strongest contender in that hazardous frontier sport, rough and tumble fighting. He weighed two hundred and ten pounds and had complete confidence in his prowess, for he won many wagers on himself and did not lose enthusiasm for the sport until an opponent gouged out one of his eyes. He quit the sport and thenceforth indulged his love of competition in political argument, another favorite frontier pastime. Jacob was a Jacksonian Democrat.

In 1827 Jacob moved his wife, eleven children, and household, farm, and mechanic equipment to Morgan County, Illinois, next west to Sangamon County, and two years later moved on to Adams County, which borders the Mississippi River. Here he "took up" a large farm and added to his farming income by making wagons, barrels, buckets, and tubs, and by doing

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a bareback horse and squeeze the breath out of it with his legs.

general carpentry. There was no sawmill in the area, so he made planks by hand, using a whip saw. As very few of his neighbors had wagons, Jacob did most of the marketing for the families in his area. He saw the Illinois frontier grow into settled communities and, no doubt, was proud of his share in the process. At the end of his life he owned two hundred and forty acres of land, much stock, good houses and barns. He died in 1865 at the age of eighty, his life having spanned that period of his country's history from the making of the Constitution to the proving of the Union.[4]

The eldest son of Jacob and Comfort Pile was Johnson, who was born in Fentress County, Tennessee, December 9, 1809. He was nine when the family moved to Indiana and eighteen when they settled in Illinois. Johnson had a good common-school education and loved history. He married Delila Jones in 1829, and as soon as he was twenty-one he "took up" or "entered" two hundred and forty acres of land, staked it, cleared it, and claimed it as his homestead. Delila died in

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[4]All of the history of Jacob Pile is taken from the Pyle Family Record Book. Jacob's youngest son, William A. Pile, born in 1827, became a Methodist preacher, then a chaplain in the Union Army where his talent for strategy caused him to be made a field officer. He was with the Union forces at Corinth and Vicksburg and was a brigadier-general at the end of the war. He went to Congress from St. Louis, was Governor of New Mexico Territory 1869-71, and President Grant appointed him Minister to Venezuela. On his return to the United States he went to California where he was a real estate broker, established the town of Monrovia, and died in 1889, a wealthy man.

1841, leaving seven children. Johnson took the youngest of the children to live with her family in Kentucky, returned to Illinois and married "a young, inexperienced woman" with whom he lived only a short time. He took his other children to Kentucky, leaving his wife behind, and stayed there three years. This constituted legal separation. He then married "a noble woman," Eusybia Brown, and took her and six of his children back to his farm in Illinois in 1846. In 1852 Johnson sold his two hundred and forty acres and moved to Texas, where he bought three hundred and fifty acres in Fannin County, which borders on the Red River.

Johnson Pile and his older sons cleared land and planted cotton and corn on these fertile acres. The region was in about the same state of settlement as was Illinois when Jacob moved to its westernmost county. Texas had been in the Union only four years and the frontier stretched roughly from north to south just west of the center of the state, where a line of army posts protected settlers from the predatory Indians beyond. Frontier life was as exciting for Johnson's younger sons as it had been for him in Tennessee and Indiana, but the day was fast approaching when a man's politics could endanger his life as much as wild animals and wild Indians. Johnson was an old-line Whig and when that party ceased to exist he gave his allegiance to the new Republican party. When the Civil War began he was a staunch Union man and not careful

about making his sentiments known. There were neighbors of his political opinion, however, newly arrived from northern states as was the Pile family, and Johnson managed to hold his ground until after the war ended. By 1866 the return of Confederate veterans and the progress of Reconstruction in Texas made life unbearable. Johnson sold his farm and moved to Franklin County in Northwestern Arkansas, where two of his sons, Dave and Andrew, were living.[5] In 1869 Eusybia died, having given him seven children. In 1871 he married (for the fourth time) a Mrs. Graham, and in 1880 he died at the age of seventy-one. Most of his four daughters and ten sons survived him.[6]

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[5]Two radio scripts presented by Laura V. Hamner on KGNC, Amarillo, in 1945, recounting the life of Harvey M. Pile, pioneer teacher and son of Johnson Pile, were prepared from interviews with Harvey Pile's daughter, Mrs. Aubrey Scott of Amarillo, and from family papers in Mrs. Scott's possession. The first script contains the following description of Johnson's three-wagon party on the journey from Texas to Arkansas: "One wagon, drawn by three yokes of oxen, is loaded with provisions to last a year--100 pounds of bacon, 2,000 pounds of flour, other food in proportion. In a wagon drawn by a span of horses ride Father and Mother Pile and two of the younger children. In another two-horse wagon, driven by Will, the youngest of the Pile boys, is a negro woman and her child, the cook for the Piles in their new home. The other Pile boys ride horseback and help the men hired to drive the 200 head of cattle and 75 horses assembled. It takes a number of riders for this work because there is danger from Indians who would like to get some of the stock."

[6]Pyle Family Record Book.

Jesse W. Pile was Johnson and Delila's first child, born in 1830 on the Illinois farm Johnson "took up" upon reaching his majority. Jesse grew up on the frontier and was remarkably self-reliant from childhood. There was little opportunity for schooling, but this did not deter him from reading every book he could get his hands on. He studied law and medicine, taught school, and was considered one of the best educated men in his community. Perhaps it was his interest in law that led to his friendship with Abraham Lincoln. Jesse did not go with his father to Texas in 1852, but stayed on in Illinois and married Gabrilia Permelia Keller in 1854. The following year their first child, Samantha, was born, followed by Myra the next year.

Jesse was receiving glowing reports of Texas from his father, and his restless spirit urged him on to new lands. He and Gabrilia loaded up the two little girls, the household goods, the lighter farming equipment, and Jesse's treasured books and set out for Texas, where every married man could receive one hundred and sixty acres of land in return for living on it three years and paying a small survey and patent fee. They settled in Fannin County near Johnson and Eusybia. A third daughter, Guly, was born in August, 1858, shortly after their arrival, and their first son, George, in September, 1859.

When the war began Jesse realized he could not live in

Confederate territory. He and Gabrilia and their small family, accompanied by Jesse's brother, Henry, returned to the North and settled in Kansas, where the two brothers served in the home guard for the duration of the war. Four more children were born to Gabrilia during this distressing time, John in 1862, Mary in 1863, and the twins, Cornelius and Cornelia, in 1865. This was indeed a tragic period in their lives for Samantha died just after they reached Kansas and the baby boy, John, lived only two years.

At the war's end Jesse was thirty-five years old. He chose to head south again and once more loaded the wagons for a long journey. His brothers, Dave and Andrew, invited him to break the trip by visiting them in Arkansas, and when their father, Johnson, arrived to make his home there it must have been a joyful family reunion after those years of hardship. Jesse claimed afterward that he was "waterbound in Arkansas seven years." In any event, he settled his family as though Franklin County was to be their permanent home, began to farm land, became a Baptist preacher, and served as Justice of the Peace. Here, near the little town of Ozark, Owen Pinkney Pyle was born on December 13, 1867, the ninth child in thirteen years of marriage, and here, also, Cecil was born in April, 1871.

The restless, moving spirit of the frontier never entirely left Jesse Pile, and by 1874, hearing that Texas had

"simmered down" enough to allow a Yankee family to live peacefully, he and Gabrilia once more loaded the wagons and started south. Only one boy, George, was old enough to be of much help to his father in driving the team or herding the few stock animals. He was fifteen; Myra, Guly, and Mary were eighteen, sixteen and eleven; the twins, Nelus and Nellie, were nine; Pink was seven and Cecil was not quite three. The wealth of this family was in the children, for Jesse and Gabrilia had accumulated little of worldly goods. The war years, the panic of 1873, the wet years in Arkansas, had taken their toll. Johnson Pile had been fairly untouched by the war, or perhaps had profited from it, for there is quite a contrast in the description of his cortège moving up out of Texas in 1866 with that of his son moving into Texas in 1874.

As Coonrod had typified the strong, resourceful immigrant adapting himself to the wilderness and wresting a fortune from it; Jacob the next phase of frontier movement in the Ohio Valley and westward, gaining a good livelihood from farming, flatboating, and mechanics; Johnson the settlement of the Mississippi east bank and the great pre-war movement into Texas, so Jesse is typical of the tremendous influx of Yankees into the Lone Star state in the post-war period. Jesse was not a carpet-bagger. He was a farmer, better educated than the average of his day, and perhaps quicker to see that the free enterprise enjoyed by his father, grandfather, and great-grand-

father was becoming hedged about with restrictions growing out of a changing, more complex economy. It was becoming more and more difficult for a farmer to make a good living for his family and Jesse hoped the struggle would be easier on the black land of North Texas.

At Warren Crossing north of Bonham, they crossed the Red River into Fannin County in the late winter and stopped with Jesse's eldest sister, Mrs. Jane Hale, who lived near Ladonia. Their number increased that August with the birth of Charles, Gabrilia's last baby.[7] Eleven mouths to feed and eleven bodies to clothe from the produce of one small rented farm. The one income crop was cotton for which the price was falling season by season. Each child worked as soon as he was large enough to wield a hoe and pull a cotton sack. Many years later, O. P. Pyle wrote of this period of his childhood:

> I began picking cotton when four years old, and stayed with my job well, as my father, brothers and sisters will testify...At the age of seven I went between the plow handles and "stayed there" until I was twenty-six years old.[8]

There was little opportunity for schooling in rural

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[7]All biographical data on Jesse Pile is from the Pyle Family Record Book.

[8]Pyle letter, Texas Farmer, January 20, 1906. In conversation with the writer on June 8, 1957, Dexter Cooper and Frank Donavan (half brothers, sons of Myra Pile Cooper Donavan, and cousins of the writer) declared they had heard their grandfather, Jesse, boast many times of how energetic and precocious

Texas in the 'seventies and 'eighties and the few schools were open only during the winter months when the children were not needed in the fields. Pink and his brothers went to school as much as possible, but Pink missed two winters completely, one because of work and the other because he had inflammatory rheumatism. Gabrilia, a sensitive, intelligent woman who had received the best education possible in rural Illinois in preparation for teaching, worked with her children over the family books as often as she could steal time from the crowded work-day.[9]

In the fall of 1877 when Pink was almost ten years old Jesse Pile moved his family to Hunt County, next south of Fannin, and rented a place near Caddo Mills. The following year he bought four hundred acres at Clinton, seven miles west of Greenville, the county seat of Hunt County.[10] This was the first real home in young Pink's memory, and the family

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Pink was in the cotton fields. In those days boys wore dresses until they were about five years old. It was a matter of family history that Pink could pick a hundred pounds of cotton per day "before he wore trousers."

[9]The writer's mother, Susie Gibson Pyle, spoke innumerable times of how O. P. Pyle adored his mother, how she encouraged him in pursuit of knowledge, and how she taught her children everything she remembered of her own education.

[10]Letter in Texas Farmer and Pyle Family Record Book. The latter mentions that Jesse Pile bought four hundred acres of blackland from Tom Bean for $100.00 and "had to plow out hog-wallows four feet deep."

worked even harder than they had on rented land. They "finally succeeded in paying for it."[11]

The following year Pink experienced his first tragedy--Gabrilia died of pneumonia incurred when she went several miles in icy weather one night to aid a woman in childbirth. He was at all times obedient and reverent to his father, but most of his love centered on his mother. He and Gabrilia had been very close, for he was much like her in disposition, having inherited from her sensitiveness, gentleness, love of knowledge, and a nervous system keyed higher than the average. His recovery from this shattering experience was slow and painful.

Pink's older sisters, Myra and Guly, had recently married, so to Mary, just sixteen, fell the task of managing the Pile household until Jesse married Mrs. Harriet Forline Bush in 1880. The Pile children welcomed their step-mother and her daughter, Willie, and nine-year-old son, Jesse N., with affection and Jesse Pile adopted the boy legally. Soon the children loved each other like "blood kin."[12] The birth of two little sisters further cemented this close relationship,

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[11]Letter in Texas Farmer.

[12]Dr. Jesse N. Pyle confirmed this in an interview with the writer June 10, 1957, in his Dallas home. Paralysis prevented him from answering more than "yes" or "no" to questions, but his mind was clear and he made it plain that he had idolized his step-brother, Pink, above the others. He died two weeks later at the age of eighty-six.

for Ivy made her appearance in December, 1881, and Inez, the last of Jesse Pile's children, was born in June, 1883.[13]

That was a year of changes in the Pile household, for both George and Mary married and fifteen-year-old Pink went to live with his Uncle Harvey Pile, who farmed nearby and taught a rural school. Almost all country teachers farmed in those days because the pay was not sufficient to support a family. Harvey was a better teacher than farmer and was glad to have the help of his nephew, who was willing, experienced, and was developing a big, well-muscled physique. Pink was happy to pay for his board by doing the chores mornings, evenings, and Saturdays during the short school term, and by working from sunup to sundown during the growing season. He memorized long poems for the "Friday afternoon program," worked mathematics problems in his head, and reviewed spelling words while he milked and attended to his other chores. Harvey understood the boy and encouraged him constantly in his competitive spirit and determination to improve himself, while

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[13]These dates are from the Pyle Family Record Book, as are all those for births, marriages, and deaths. Mrs. Inez Cress is the only child of Jesse Pile now living. She resides in Mesquite, Texas, near Dallas. She describes her father as a God-fearing man, strict with his children but always kind. Dexter Cooper and Frank Donavan recall that he was well-read in medicine for his time and never spared himself in answering calls for help from miles around. There were no licensed doctors within reach and no one questioned his lack of a license, as his neighbors were glad to have medical aid for which no fee was charged.

Harvey's wife, Mary Ann, cared for him as though he were her son.[14]

The rural school in those days had little formal curriculum, adjusting its presentation to the ability of the pupils. There were more pupils in the lower age levels than in the "teens," for the boys were needed in the farm work and the girls helped at home and married early. The one teacher listened to recitations of the pupils singly or in groups according to the books they were studying and advanced them according to their individual achievements, not by formal classes. The subjects were reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, history, and geography. Pink mastered every book he and his uncle could obtain, and then Harvey began to train him in the art of teaching by having him assist with the younger pupils.

This was one of Harvey Pile's special talents. He anticipated teacher college methods by many years, and through the hundreds of young people he prepared for the profession he made a great contribution to the Texas school system. He carefully selected the subjects in which to instruct his prospective teachers so they would be well prepared for the examination given by a board (usually teachers) appointed by the

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[14]The writer's mother often repeated for her children stories their father used to tell of his life with Uncle Harvey and Aunt Mary. The writer's older brothers and sisters had the pleasure of knowing this unforgettable couple.

county judge. On passing an examination on certain subjects, one received a second grade certificate and could begin at once to teach; but it required further study to pass the examination for a first grade certificate, the highest rating in the profession at that time. Harvey Pile once took twenty-five of his pupils to county board examinations and all were given first grade certificates, a tribute to his expert and dedicated training ability.

Harvey's other great talent was in reviving defunct or lagging rural schools, improving the curriculum, attracting all eligible students, and making the school the center of community activity. After re-establishing a school and training teachers to take it over, he would move on and repeat the process in another locality. He was unconcerned that the pay was so meager, for he was happiest when teaching and felt fully compensated by the real results of his work.

Pink absorbed much more from his uncle than the mechanics of teaching, for Harvey Pile impressed on his pupils many precepts that stayed with them all of their lives: "Books are valuable not for what we get out of them, but for what they get out of us: the power to utilize eternal truths." "Nothing of character is permanent but virtue and personal worth." "Any man is poor whose farm is not worth the mortgage." "Man is born for higher destiny than that of earth." "Ignorant people are incapable of self-government." "It is dangerous to com-

promise principle when shaping a policy." Harvey mixed practical living with high purpose. He was a deeply religious man and shared with his nephew his knowledge of the Bible and his thoughts on man's obligations to his fellow-man.[15] Young Pink learned to quote long passages from the Bible, and social justice based on Christ's teachings became his youthful "cause."[16]

At eighteen Pink earned his first grade certificate and became a full-fledged teacher, assisting Uncle Harvey in the Clinton school, which had become a fine high-school. He was now a grown man, ready to strike out on a venture to earn a "stake." He and his brothers, Nelus and Cecil, bought a part of their father's farm and worked together for a year, Pink teaching school in the winter. Cecil, who preferred traveling to farming, sold them his share and Nelus and Pink worked the acreage together the next season. This was the devastating year of drought and boll weevils. It was a bitter experience to invest so much hard work and receive nothing in return,

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[15]Mrs. Hamner's radio scripts. In his later years Harvey Pile lived in New Mexico and served in the State Legislature. Among his writings was a treatise on spiritual life, the manuscript of which was lost in a fire. This son of Eusybia and Johnson Pile was born in Illinois in 1851 and died in 1942 in Clovis, New Mexico.

[16]The writer's mother said many times that O. P. Pyle was greatly indebted to his uncle for these precepts and considered his uncle the most important influence on his adolescent years.

and it was a blow to a proud young ego, but it brought an intangible but nonetheless real dividend in the keen realization of the farmer's vulnerability to the ravages of nature, and his pitiful economic insecurity. These trials had been the dominant force in Pyle's environment from birth and he had been well aware of them, but nothing emphasizes a general injustice quite so pointedly as personal application. The undirected wishes of adolescence crystalized into a mature resolution: to do something for the farmer became the ruling passion of his life.

The first step was to strike out on his own away from family, away from the aegis of Uncle Harvey. Pink sold his share of the farm to Nelus, saddled up, and rode southeast across Rains County to Alba, a little hamlet just over the line in Wood County.[17] Here he heard of a rural school that might be available for a persuasive young teacher. The community of Salem, three miles north of Alba, consisted of a small store and a church which doubled as a school to serve the farm families nearby. The teacher of this tiny school, one John Schenks, no longer pleased some of the patrons, who were eager to replace him. Young Pink Pyle rode out to Salem, called on the school trustee, and persuaded him to call a meeting of the patrons at which he could present his credentials

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[17]Letter in Texas Farmer and letter of Mrs. Jesse N. Pyle to the writer dated July 20, 1957.

and ask for the job and the incumbent could present his reasons for being retained. It is said that even as a very young man Pyle was a persuasive speaker, and he must have been at his best that evening, for after hearing both teachers out the assemblage voted to hire Pyle for the job. This was his first public appearance in Wood County, where he was soon to become known as an outstanding speaker. The experience gained in countless Friday afternoon debates and extemporaneous speech contests in Uncle Harvey's school had given him a natural command of English and an easy flow of argument that was enhanced by his handsome face and warm personality.[18]

That evening's work won for the young teacher more than a job. In the audience with Zachary Taylor Gibson, the school trustee, were his wife, Sarah Angeline McChristian Gibson, and their school-age daughters, the eldest of whom was Mildred Suzanne. Susie was a brown-haired, brown-eyed girl of seventeen, barely four feet and eleven inches in height and so delicate of build that at first glance she could be mistaken for a child. There was nothing child-like in her mature and positive snap-judgment of the stranger. She had been Mr. Schenk's star pupil and did not want him replaced by anyone, much less a six-foot-two "beanpole" who went after

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[18]This scene was described by the writer's mother in answer to the age-old question of daughters: "Mother, how did you meet Father?"

the job in such a brazen manner. However, she noticed his fine, black hair, smooth, fair freckled skin, dimples, and mischievous blue eyes whose glance returned to her face again and again as he made his plea. He was disturbingly handsome and, to her mind, entirely too conceited. She neither knew nor cared that evening that he had fallen in love with her at first sight. He, however, was acutely aware of his sudden enslavement, and the fear of losing a chance to be with her in the classroom every day added desperate force to his appeal.[19]

On opening day the new teacher looked in vain for the school's eldest pupil, but Susie had decided her education was finished. Every day for a week her younger sisters received solicitous attention from "Teacher," and in the evenings they noticed he made some excuse to visit their father. Zachary Gibson had voted against the applicant, but he welcomed him open-mindedly, and these conversations were the beginning of a firm and lasting friendship between the farmer and the farmer-teacher who shared many opinions and beliefs, chiefly those on Christian behavior and the need for

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[19]The writer's aunt, Mrs. Tillman Francis of North Zulch, Texas, who was Mary Genevra Gibson, was thirteen years old when the Gibson family met Pink Pyle. She gives a vivid and humorous account of the evening and of the events that followed, stating that Pink "set his cap" for Susie from their first meeting and courted her assiduously until she capitulated.

a business-like approach to farming. The young teacher charmed the other members of the family but made little progress with Susie, though she did return to school the second week.

Pink found board and room a half mile from the Gibsons with Mrs. Gibson's uncle, Jim Pope, and his wife, Ann. The Popes went away for a visit that winter, leaving Pink to look after himself, and in their absence he caught pneumonia and lay helpless and very ill. Sarah Gibson, ever an angel of mercy in the community, gave him as much attention as she could spare from her large family and sent Susie and the older girls to him with food and medicine. Susie taught the younger children until his strength returned, and thereafter was both pupil and assistant.[20] In this close relationship Susie began to return his love and on December 21, 1890, they were married in the Gibson home.[21] Pink borrowed a buggy and took his bride on a wedding journey to the Jesse Pile home near Clinton. His sisters and brothers gathered for a Christmas reunion and

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[20]This story was told by Mrs. Pyle and is verified by Mrs. Francis. Pink evidently promoted interest in the school for the Wood County Democrat, Centennial Edition, July 27, 1950, states: "In 1889 there was erected a log school house at Salem some two or three miles from Alba, on the Sulphur Springs road. This house was in the Pope settlement."

[21]Pyle Family Record Book. At Susie's request, her husband changed the spelling of his name to Pyle, and his brothers and sisters followed his lead.

were charmed by tiny Susie, sweeping her up into their arms as though she were a doll.[22]

Back in Salem, they finished the short school year and Pink put in another crop. When the little town of Alba requested his services as teacher, Pink took the job. The Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway had built its line through Alba in 1887 and opened a depot, and several mercantile establishments were doing a good business. The farms in the area looked prosperous. Enough children were coming into Alba for schooling to justify the building in 1887 of a two-story structure twenty-eight feet by thirty feet.[23] Pink and Susie rented a small house in Alba and farm acreage nearby, and settled down to devoted married life that was to last thirty years.

Pink Pyle was blessed with tremendous nervous energy and, in his youth, great physical strength as well. This was to serve him well in these early years for he drove himself tirelessly, teaching school, farming, and selling insurance simultaneously. He managed within three years to finish paying

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[22]The story of this honeymoon-family reunion was told by Susie Pyle with much amusement. Excepting the youngest, Inez, all the Pyle family members were tall, large-boned people. Ivy Pyle (Mrs. Will) Wells was barely ten years old when her adored older brother, Pink, married, but she remembered this happy occasion and described it to the writer several times in the later years of her life. She died January 21, 1951.

[23]Wood County Democrat, Centennial Edition. The Masonic Lodge occupied the upper floor of the school building.

off a thousand-dollar debt incurred in '88 when his crop failed, to furnish a house, to help send his younger brothers and sisters to school, and to support his growing family in comfort.[24] On December 20, 1891, a son was born to Susie and Pink and they named him Charles Weaver for Pink's favorite brother, Charles, and for General James Baird Weaver, champion of the farmer and soon to be the Populist party's candidate for President of the United States. On October 14, 1893, LaVera Suzanne was born.

Those who knew Pyle at this time remember him as extremely energetic--"the busiest man you ever saw, but always ready to chat with a friend." He was always cheerful, never burdened his friends with his own troubles, and invariably answered the customary "How are you?" with: "Hebrews 13:8 (Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever)."[25] In 1891 he joined the Masonic Order and was a Master Mason of Alba Lodge No. 633, A.F. & A.M., an association he valued highly.[26]

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[24]This information is from the writer's memory of family stories and from the fragmentary biography of O. P. Pyle written by his wife.

[25]A. B. Cain, interview, August 28, 1956. Mr. Cain owned the largest general store in Alba in the 'nineties and his brother was a Populist member of the State Legislature one term. He enjoyed recalling anecdotes about his good friend, Pyle.

[26]Belton Journal, December 12, 1919. Pyle's Masonic record is listed in the obituary written by Attorney George W. Tyler (author of History of Bell County) for Belton Lodge No. 166, A.F. & A.M. Pyle rose through Royal Arch Masons, Royal

Pyle was also a member of the Farmers' Alliance of Wood County and it was in this organization that he began to fulfill his aim of helping his fellow-farmers.[27]

Shortly after his marriage, the Wood County Alliance asked him to take on the job of recruiting new members and making speeches at any meeting where a speaker was needed in that section. This meant constant study and preparation, and countless trips by horseback or in a buggy, but to Pyle it was recreation rather than work and it brought a real sense of accomplishment. The Alliance was very popular in the surrounding countryside and supplied the main stimulus for social gatherings. In nice weather Pyle would lift Susie, the children, and a big basket of lunch into the buggy and drive to an Alliance picnic where his talk interpreting current political questions and expounding Alliance principles would be the main feature of the program.[28] His facility as

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and Select Masons, and Templar Orders, to become a Knight Templar, and was prelate of the Belton Commandery the last year of his life.

[27]The exact date Pyle joined the Alliance cannot be ascertained as all records were long since destroyed. Charles S. Barrett, Mission, History and Times of the Farmers' Union (Nashville, 1909), 404, in biography of O. P. Pyle states: "He was a member of the Farmers' Alliance while teaching..." A. B. Cain asserted Pyle was a member when he came to Alba, and soon became extremely active in the organization.

[28]The writer's mother spoke many times of these activities in the early years of her married life.

a speaker grew with every appearance and his fame spread farther afield, for he leavened his speeches with witty (but never coarse) stories, could recall poems and famous addresses and quote them with ease in the manner of the time, and loved to burst into song and lead his audience with him.[29]

Pyle's solid reputation, however, rested on his ability to go to the core of a question and analyze it from all sides in forceful, simple language.[30] His teaching experience was good training for these speaking assignments, for the farmers did not hesitate to ask questions, to interrupt the speaker, and to differ with him. They were informed on the chief topics of interest, especially those affecting their economic and social welfare, and the young Alliance lecturer had to be prepared to explain the intricacies of cotton marketing, the significance of events taking place in Jim Hogg's administration in Austin, the prospects of getting Grover Cleveland elected again, and, after 1892, the "un-Democratic" change in Cleveland's policies, the technicalities of "free silver," the sub-treasury plan, and the problems raised by the upsurge of the young, independent political organization called

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[29]Letter of Mrs. Inez Cress to the writer, February 27, 1957.

[30]Judge Ewing Boyd of Houston, interview, March 3, 1957. Judge Boyd knew Pyle well in the 'nineties and heard him make many speeches.

the People's party.[31]

As a matter of fact, the Populist party was drawing more and more converts away from the Democratic party, especially among Texas farmers who were feeling the pinch between paying off their crop liens and mortgages and the price they were receiving for their cotton. They wanted relief from the "hard times" which they felt were due to political malpractices or official neglect by the Democratic party. They believed relief could be effected by putting into action the People's party platform, which was almost word for word the "demands" or list of recommendations of the Farmers' Alliance. Along with scores of other Wood County farmers, Pink Pyle deserted the Democratic fold for Populism, carrying his crusade briefly into political fields. His friends encouraged him to run for county judge on the Populist ticket in the 1892 election. Having in the immediate past read enough law to consider himself equipped to serve on the bench, the twenty-four-year-old teacher began to grow a beard in an effort to look older, and "stumped the county" for votes. His youth, or the youth of his party, or the popularity of the incumbent (Virgil B. Harris, a Democrat),[32] or a combination

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[31]These topics were gleaned from newspapers of the time as being those of greatest interest to the farmer. A. B. Cain commented that Pyle was extremely well-informed on state and national policies and politics, and that he was much in demand as a speaker during his Alba residence.

[32]Wood County Democrat Centennial Edition, list of county officers 1850-1950.

of the three, inflicted upon him a severe defeat. After this experience, Pyle decided that his place was not in public office but in the wings of the political stage. That was the vantage point from which to pursue his crusade.[33]

Such a position was presented to him less than two years later. The Wood County Farmers' Alliance had established a weekly newspaper in Mineola, the largest town in the county, to keep its members informed of Alliance activities and to interpret the issues of the day. The young lecturer-organizer in Alba had been contributing articles to the paper, the Mineola Courier, from time to time. It became evident to those in control that Pyle had a writing style equally as interesting and convincing as his platform style, and they offered him the editorship of the paper. Pyle considered it a great honor to represent and work for the farmers of his county and he also felt attracted to the newspaper business.[34] He resigned his teaching position and in the fall of 1894 moved his family to Mineola, bought a house, and

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[33]This is another family story related by the writer's mother and verified by Mrs. Francis, whose first husband, John McCook, ran for justice of the peace on the Populist ticket in the same election. Pyle was often urged to run for office but, with the exception of the instance described, always refused.

[34]Letter in Texas Farmer.

bought farmland on the east edge of town.[35] Eagerly he entered the profession that was to absorb his talents and energy for the rest of his life, providing livelihood for his large family and a soundingboard for his cause.

It is difficult to estimate the character of a man at a given point in his career, but the task is made easier in the case of O. P. Pyle because he matured early, found his purpose in life, and did not deviate from it. At twenty-seven he had the solid character, intellect, and emotional responses that he would have all his remaining years. Physically he became more impressive as he matured, for in the mid-'nineties his big frame began to fill out until he weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, gradually increasing to three hundred by his thirty-second birthday. This made him a rather out-standing figure in any crowd and gave him a commanding appearance on a speaker's platform.

His face was full and singularly unlined even in middle-age; his blue eyes were rather large and penetrating under slightly drooped lids and peaked, black eyebrows, and his nose was straight and high-bridged. Fair skin, silky, black hair above a high forehead, and his blue eyes suggested Irish blood

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[35]In this house little Romaine Veno was born November 23, 1895, and lived the two short years of his life. Mrs. Pyle read a great deal and readily admitted that she took this unusual name from a novel.

mixed with his German heritage. In repose the delicately-shaped lips of his generous mouth drooped at the corners, belying the gay, often mischievous nature of the man. His infectious smiles showed even teeth and a pair of deep dimples. The years of back-bending toil in the fields left no effect on his posture and he held himself erect and walked with that natural dignity that was known as "a fine carriage."[36]

Two of his dominant personality traits were mirrored plainly in his open face: an intense, driving force and a sensitive, compassionate love of humanity. These two qualities complemented each other, with a result beneficial to his family, to his wide circle of friends, and to the movement in which he played so vital a role. Some inner compulsion drove him constantly to use his physical, mental and nervous forces in prodigal fashion, never sparing himself. This was not undirected expenditure of energy, however, but the controlled, well-organized industry of a keen intelligence. There was so much to be accomplished and such urgent need for reforms. A man must have strong motivation for such extravagant use of his faculties, and Pyle had ample motivation in his desire to provide generously for his large family, to

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[36]From the writer's memory and from photographs. As the writer was barely eight years old at his death, details of his physical and mental characteristics have been checked with her two sisters, Mrs. A. D. Dyess, Sr., and Mrs. J. C. Milligan, Sr., and her brother, Harold Gibson Pyle, all of Houston.

help educate his younger brothers and sisters, and to pursue his life's purpose.

His big heart went out to all whom he might help, for he had a truly humanitarian spirit.[37] He was generous with money, generous with his time, and generous with his sympathy. In an era noted for sentiment and even sentimentality, Pyle was in complete harmony with his time for if he could be criticized for any one excess it was emotionalism.[38] He could never be coldly calculating for his warm heart ruled his head on every decision concerning human welfare. This was a large factor in his magnetic personality. It is not an exaggeration

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[37]Mr. J. W. Bogan of Mineola, in conversation August 28, 1956: "I was a hard-working farmer with little book-learning and Mr. Pyle was a smart, well-educated man, but from the time I first met him when he came to Mineola it seemed like he was always figuring what he could do to help men like me and what we needed to do to help ourselves." Mr. Bogan died October 18, 1957, at the age of ninety-nine years, five months and eight days. In a conversation on June 7, 1957, he told the writer some of his childhood memories of the Civil War when his father, Captain Henry S. Bogan, was a procurement officer for General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

[38]Although the demands of his public life took him away from home much too often, Pyle was lavish in love of his family and sentimental about family ties. His favorite song was "My Darling Nellie Gray," and from a wide repertory of poems he recited from memory, he loved Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar," and Edgar A. Guest's "House By the Road," with its line: "Let me live in a house by the side of the road and be a friend to man." The writer remembers rare, ecstatic evenings in her childhood when "Daddy" played the piano and sang, and recited poetry. The songs and poems were either gay nonsense or sad, tender ballads.

to say that people were drawn to him and those who knew him never forgot him.[39]

Next after his love of humanity, the most revealing key to Pyle's personality and philosophy of life was his attitude toward religion. To him religion was not a garment to be worn carefully on Sunday; it was a vibrant, powerful way of life against which to measure each day's decisions. He absorbed this at his mother's knee and as a growing boy shared the practice of Christian homelife with his brothers and sisters and his father, Jesse, who was a devout lay preacher. Harvey Pile added his influence in the adolescent years and Zachary Gibson his in the years of early manhood.

Zach Gibson was that unusual type of man who exemplified Christ's teachings in every thought and deed. This development of his character came with maturity, for he had been rather unrestrained in his youth on the post-Civil War Texas frontier. A few years after his marriage to Sarah McChristian, he began to study the various Protestant creeds to determine which fulfilled his soul's hunger. This study brought

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[39]It has been a source of pleasure to the writer in interviewing friends of O. P. Pyle to note their eagerness to speak of him, the clarity and detail of their memories of him, and their hero-worshipping expressions. To his sisters-in-law, no less than to his own sisters, he was a combination of hero and adored big brother. The Gibson girls, including Susie, <u>always</u> addressed him as "Mr. Pyle."

him to the decision that Christ's teachings convey all the "creed" a man needs in this life and in preparation for the next life. The Disciples of Christ appealed to him as the best answer to his desire for church affiliation, and he and Sarah became staunch members of that denomination.[40] In the many long and serious discussions Gibson had with his son-in-law, religion was a favorite subject, especially ethical and moral values in daily life--the possibility of living according to Christ's teachings. They explored together the Gospel books of the New Testament and the accounts of the early church, and Pyle, too, decided that creeds and dogmas added to the Christian religion since that time are unnecessary in following a Christ-like way of life. He joined the Disciples of Christ congregation and from then on was a "pillar of the church" wherever he lived, preaching as a layman whenever no ordained minister was available and shouldering responsibilities for the local church and its missionary activities, always aided by his wife.[41]

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[40]The Disciples of Christ, or Christian Church, the first denomination born on American soil, was organized on the Kentucky-West Virginia frontier in 1809 by Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists who wanted to drop all man-made creeds and old-country restrictions for individual religious responsibility based on belief in the divinity of Christ, His teachings to be their creed. At first this was a movement against denominationalism, but it became a denomination through the necessity for organization.

[41]The writer recalls this from her childhood in Belton and Mrs. Francis confirms that he was a lay leader of his church in Mineola and in Dallas.

Christian principles were so throughly inbued in Pyle that he automatically measured his own actions and those of his fellow men by the highest standards, expecting the best of everyone. This is one of the chief reasons why he would not take political office wherein it is so often necessary to compromise principles, but chose rather to serve his government by searching out and supporting for office men of highest integrity.[42] Christian faith in man's innate goodness and an intense desire to improve the lot of the less fortunate--these were integral to his character.

Pyle brought to his career as champion of the farmer several special abilities that were almost indispensible for the avocation he chose. As a young man he developed a facility in writing that would have been notable had he had the advantages of the best college education. His wide reading under Uncle Harvey's tutelage and his mastery of the principles of grammar and construction gave him a foundation upon which to base his natural, simple style. When he began to write speeches and later to write editorials and news stories for the Courier he may have been somewhat florid in style as

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[42]Temple Mirror, November 23, 1919: "There was no man in Texas of higher moral standing or courage than Mr. Pyle. He fought for the things he believed in and if he was wrong at any time it was because he was not acquainted with all the facts and conditions, for honesty and truth were strong characteristics of his life. He was well versed on political matters, had strong convictions and unwaveringly presented them."

was the prevailing fashion, but under the pressure of time and the urgency to make all his readers understand his arguments, he developed a clear, forceful, and effective form of composition that was considered by some superior to his speaking talent.[43]

Oratorical ability was much prized in those days of two and three hour speeches when the speaker's voice had to reach to the back of the hall or to the farthest edges of the outdoor crowd. Perhaps Pyle's stature and bulk were an advantage, as in the case of Wagnerian singers. He made an unforgettable impression on his hearers, judging from the descriptions given by those who heard him.[44] One friend,

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[43]Judge Boyd, in an interview March 27, 1957, stated that he read the Mineola Courier regularly, thought Pyle a better writer than speaker, and considered him the equal of Colonel William Sterrett, Washington correspondent for the Dallas News, who had the highest reputation for political writing in Texas. Judge Boyd's father published the Delta Courier in Cooper, county seat of Delta County, exchanged with the Mineola Courier, and reprinted material from Pyle's editorial page almost every week. According to Judge Boyd, Pyle had an amazing talent for putting a random idea or bit of information into a pithy "squib," as such items were called. Pyle also had a great facility in editing, he said: "He could blue-pencil half of some one else's speech and make it twice as good."

[44]Every person interviewed commented on Pyle's exceptional speaking ability: Mr. Cain of Alba; Judge Boyd of Houston; Mrs. Francis; Mr. Ellie Reaves, Mr. C. E. Revelle, and Mr. J. W. Bogan of Mineola; Mr. R. L. King of Greenville; and Mrs. R. H. Templeton of Brashear. Senator Tom Connally of Washington, D.C., in a letter to the writer March 1, 1957, commented on Pyle's powers as an orator. The writer's sister,

who knew Pyle in his early years as editor and speaker and followed his career with interest, wrote of him later:

> As a speaker, he had few equals in Texas, and no superiors. Fluent, master of imagery, with strong resonant voice, he thrilled and moved his audiences at will. He was a forceful, logical and versatile writer. Quick with his pen to combat error, but always in kindly spirit and winning manner, he was equally as prompt to commend wherever commendation was due.[45]

Another talent of this editor—orator is indicated in the last statement. He drew friends to him and kept them through the years, for he was warm, sympathetic, considerate, generous, and gentle. His high moral standards gave him a steadfastness to which his friends could tie their faith. The ability to make and hold friends is one of the most necessary attributes of the office-seeker, but Pyle was not in the slightest degree self-seeking, turning his magnetic attraction to the benefit of his cause rather than to personal gain.

Pyle was blessed with a phenomenal memory that was a

Mrs. Dyess, heard him speak many times and believes the reason his services were so highly prized by gubernatorial candidates and others running for high offices was his technique in steadily and dramatically building up the interest and emotions of his audience to a high pitch of excitement.

[45]Belton Journal, December 4, 1919, letter of Charles L. Martin dated December 1, 1919, to Mrs. O. P. Pyle. This praise could be discounted, coming as it did from an old friend just after Pyle's death, but it is echoed in all the letters of eulogy published at that time in the Journal. Martin, born in 1839 in San Augustine, Republic of Texas, was on the editorial staff of the Dallas News.

boon in the conduct of business and in holding friendships. He could quote long passages of Scripture and, from an early age, could give an accurate outline of a sermon he had just heard, and repeat much of its text.[46] As his children reached the age to study English and American literature, they were constantly delighted and surprised to hear him recite long poems, verse after verse.

Although Owen Pinkney Pyle was slow to anger, injustice aroused in him a loathing and impatience that required his strongest will to suppress. He was ruled as much by his heart as by his head and would continue to believe the best of an unfaithful friend, rare as they were in his experience, until circumstances forced him to face the facts. Because he held himself to such high standards and expected the same of others, such a defection could throw him into a fit of depression for some time, until his usually optimistic nature reasserted itself. He was not unstable emotionally and to the public and his intimates he maintained at all times a controlled, cheerful attitude, but some psychic blow

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[46]This is a story he told on himself because it was a source of family amusement in his boyhood. His great-uncle, William A Pile, who was governor of New Mexico Territory, had this facility in his youth, although otherwise he was a trial to his family with respect to clothes, speech, habits, and discipline. He suddenly outgrew his unruly ways at about eighteen years of age and became a model son. Pink's brothers averred that perhaps he would make something of himself, since he had inherited Uncle William's memory.

in his childhood--perhaps the death of his mother--left him subject to moods of severe doubt and depression, alternating with moods of genuine and spontaneous geniality. His wife was the center of his existence, his sweetheart, confidante, and substitute mother. Inherent in his sensitive and emotional approach to life were his strengths and his weaknesses.[47]

In 1894 when Pyle's influence began to be felt beyond the borders of his home county, the Texas agrarian movement was entering the final scene of its nineteenth century drama. Many Texas farmers, while learning co-operation and its pitfalls in a national benevolent society devoted entirely to agrarian interests, had been drawn into a political organization that promised an immediate panacea for their economic ills. When that party proved incapable of fulfilling its promise, thousands of Texas farmers joined a new benevolent society born in their state in answer to farm problems intrinsically Texan. This organization followed essentially the same pattern as the first in efforts toward co-operation, mistakes by management, and mistrust of its officials by the rank and file members. By 1894 its absorption by a third political party was well under way.

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[47]The reader will readily understand the difficulty encountered in endeavoring to reveal and analyze the personality of a beloved parent whom one has known only as a child. The foregoing is a composite of memories and deductions drawn from everyone who knew him well whom the writer has been able to contact.

CHAPTER II

In the years immediately following the Civil War, the returned soldier-farmers of Texas devoted their energies to repairing their homes, fences, and outbuildings which had deteriorated in their absence, replenishing their stock, and growing as much cotton as possible. The mills were clamoring for cotton at the end of the war and the price stayed fairly high until 1871 when the general price was 17.9¢ per pound, but from that year the price declined steadily.[1] After the panic of 1873 money became increasingly tight and the farmer was caught between the appreciating dollar and the diminishing price for his crop.

Although, of course, other crops were raised in Texas, cotton was so predominant that the state's economy was based upon the production and marketing of this staple. There was agitation for crop diversity, but the "native" Texas farmer continued his planting habits and the "immigrants" from the Old South, the North, and the Middle West (such as Jesse Pile) followed the same pattern, despite the fact that world cotton

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[1]Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Yearbook for 1899 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1900), 764, 765. The decline was marked by slight fluctuations but by 1890 the price was 8.6¢ and the century closed on 5.7¢ cotton.

production was increasing faster that the demand.[2] Why did the small cotton-grower continue to produce as much of the staple as possible and dump it on the market in the fall for whatever price prevailed, spending much of the proceeds for necessary supplies he could have grown? The answer lies in the crop-lien financed, one-crop system, a post Civil-War development that became so well entrenched the farmers could not escape its control.

When Jesse Pile brought his family to Texas in 1874, he rented farmland in Fannin County. If he had no cash to pay as rent, then he agreed to work the land and share the crop with the owner, the usual rate being one-third of cotton raised and one-fourth of corn. Probably he needed supplies--food, clothing, perhaps implements for use until harvest-time. For these he went to the local merchant, often the owner of the land, who advanced the needed items in return for a lien or chattel mortgage on the expected crop, and on the following year's crop if the current one should prove insufficient to cover the merchant's bill. The lien specified that the crop should be cotton, because it was the easiest handled and sold. When the crop was harvested Pile settled up with the merchant, including ten per cent on all purchases and

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[2]Texas Department of Agriculture Fourth Annual Report, 1890-91 (Austin, Hutchings Printing House, 1892), xxi. In Texas alone, 3,025,842 acres were added between 1889 and 1899.

handling charges, and received the cancelled lien. If the crop was poor and its value did not cover the amount owed the furnishing merchant, then the balance was carried over onto the next year's bill for supplies, for, of course, having no cash to show for his year's efforts, he would have to apply for credit to the same merchant. No merchant would lend to a man who was "on the books" of another merchant because the farmer's only collateral--his next crop--was already pledged.[3]

By dint of hard work and the efforts of his wife and children in the fields, Jesse Pile was able to continue renting and to escape the tyranny of the furnishing merchant for four years. He then bought land. It is extremely doubtful that he was able to save enough cash to pay the price outright, and more likely that he borrowed the money and gave a mortgage to secure its repayment. Perhaps he still had to sign a crop-lien with a furnishing merchant for his year's supplies. In any event, if he made good crops and was able to meet his mortgage payments plus high interest, he was most fortunate, for gold was appreciating and each successive year he had to work harder and raise more cotton to earn the same

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[3]Thomas D. Clark, "The Furnishing and Supply System in Southern Agriculture since 1865," Journal of Southern History, XII, No. 1 (February-November, 1946), 24-45. This is a detailed description of the crop-lien system with examples from store records.

amount. What happened if there was a crop failure? Many mortgage-holders demanded forfeiture of the land if only one payment was missed on principal or on interest. Dispossessed farmers became tenants on land on which they had been making mortgage and interest payments for years.[4]

Jesse Pile and his sons "finally succeeded in paying" for his land, but each year there was the frustrating realization that their hard work was not receiving its due recompense, for they had no choice but to sell at the price offered by the commission agent, who deducted an unreasonable profit for handling. Marketing monopolies kept these fees high and the value of cotton increased three or four times between the farm and the mill. The largest handling item was the freight charge to move the cotton from farm to wharf to mill. The railroads' motto in setting such freight charges seemed to be: "All the traffic will bear."

Taxes weighed more heavily on farmers like Jesse Pile and his sons than on townsmen, for the property tax was based on the entire valuation of the property no matter how small the farmer's equity in it, while those whose livelihood did

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[4]Edmund Valentine White and William S. Leonard, Studies in Farm Tenantry in Texas, University of Texas Department of Extension Bulletin No. 21 (Austin: University of Texas, 1915), 12. Taking a sample decade, "tenantry increased in Texas from 38% in 1880 to 42% in 1890." The scene in the gas-lit melodrama where the landlord foreclosed the mortgage and drove the farmer off the land was painfully familiar to a rural audience.

not come from the land paid no such tax.[5]

As if there were not enough local handicaps, the Federal government maintained a tariff policy that protected the manufacturers of almost every "ready made" article these Texas farmers bought, while their cotton was sold on a free and competitive world market. To the farmer the government's monetary policy seemed designed specifically for his undoing; not only was the steady trend of deflation making it increasingly difficult for him to repay long-term loans, but every fall when the cotton crop was sold money seemed to be scarcer and tighter than at any time of the year. Only the most prosperous farmers, with cash in the bank, could pay to store their bales in a safe, dry warehouse until after the glutted fall market eased off and the price increased with demand.

These were the Texas farmer's major economic grievances in the 'seventies and 'eighties: the appreciating dollar, the diminishing price for cotton, unfair taxation, the protective

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[5]Solon J. Buck, The Agrarian Crusade, XLV of The Chronicles of America Series, Allen Johnson, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 107: "The revenue of the Federal Government was raised wholly by indirect taxes levied principally upon articles of common consumption; and the farmer and other people of small means paid an undue share of the burden in the form of higher prices demanded for commodities." As for State taxes, in 1890 the Texas rate was 20¢ on the $100 valuation and 12½¢ for public schools, a total ad valorem tax of 32½¢. The average county tax was 48½¢ on the $100 valuation. (Department of Agriculture Report.) A merchant might falsify his inventory and a stock and bond holder could conceal his paper, but land, livestock, implements, and furniture were readily seen and assessed.

tariff, the credit system, monopolies, and exorbitant rail rates. These were the problems Pink Pyle heard "cussed and discussed" around the "pot-bellied" stove in the country store, under the shade-tree in the church-yard after services, over the fence at the end of the row during spring and fall plowing.

There were tensions and frustrations underlying these obvious economic grievances, discontent born of post-War developments in the business and social structure of the country. Industry, the baby giant of the late 19th century, was fast elbowing agriculture out of its pre-eminence and, in the process, hobbling the sons of agriculture with restrictions and penalties. As "big business" grew bigger, it seemed to the farmer that the other classes had forgotten that this country was founded by farmers and based on an agrarian economy, that the farmer was "the backbone of the nation," that his voice had commanded attentive ears in the seat of government. Fifty years earlier a Jacob Pile could clear the wilderness, raise his produce, barter it from his flatboat, pull up stakes and move on westward when he felt "civilization" closing in around him. The westward-moving small farmers of the Jacksonian Era were imbued with the conviction that the Republic rested on their broad shoulders, that the "equal opportunity" guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence was their natural and inalienable right--even though they had to push on farther

westward to attain it. A Jesse Pile, farming the good, black land of Northeast Texas in the 'eighties, felt himself no longer the free agent his grandfather had been, but rather an unwilling cog in the machinery that siphoned wealth from the cotton field through the hands of the furnishing merchant, the money-lender, the cotton broker, and the railroad agent into the coffers of Wall Street. Such a subconscious blow to pride and prestige left a wound only prosperity and political power could assuage.

The farmers of Texas in great numbers learned to unite and co-operate in efforts to bring back prosperity and to bring political pressure. Sheer weight of numbers worked in their interest for the agrarian class was predominant in Texas during the last quarter of the century. In 1870 approximately seventy per cent of all persons gainfully employed in Texas were engaged in agricultural pursuits and thirty years later this percentage had shrunk only five points.[6] Farmers as a class controlled the vote, and whoever controlled the farmers stood at the top of the political heap. Unfortunately, Texas farmers did not think alike on all issues and as their economic grievances intensified, the cleavage widened between the prosperous and the poor. Enough of them stood together, however, to make a formidable showing when they did organize.

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[6]Ninth Census of the United States, I, 671, and Twelfth Census, XI, Part II, 541.

The Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, reached Texas in the panic year of 1873, and within four years attained a membership of forty-five thousand. The objects of the Grange were to secure for its members a fuller home life, more social intercourse, and the advantages of co-operative dealing in business. The Grange stressed the need of education in scientific farming and in commercial business connected with farming. With the founding of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1876, the Grange diverted its educational efforts to the support of that institution. The peak year of Grange membership in Texas was 1876, after which it declined steadily, due chiefly to the failure of its co-operative stores. These ventures were set up to buy and sell for cash, but slipped into the credit habit and became hopelessly enmeshed in the system.[7] Many members had hoped the organization would wield political influence in the agrarian cause, although that was not the policy of the National Grange, and when a political movement appeared to offer such hope, Grangers deserted to it in great numbers.

The Greenback movement reached Texas in 1878 and for

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[7]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 7-27, reviews the history of the Texas State Grange based on Proceedings and Minutes published annually. Another evaluation of this organization is Roscie C. Martin's "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly, VI (March, 1926), 363-384.

several years was very active in state politics. The Greenback party was a strictly political organization, advocating the quantitative theory of money--or cheaper money--to solve the country's economic problems.[8] Better times in the 'eighties relieved the money shortage temporarily and the Greenback party lost power in Texas. Although its basic theory was fallacious, this movement did familiarize the farmer with the monetary question. Unfortunately, it also centered his attention on cheap money as a panacea for his economic ills.

Concurrent with the Greenback movement and the Grange was another organization, born of depression and giving voice to agrarian unrest. The Farmers' Alliance began in Pleasant Valley, Lampasas County, Texas, in 1874, as a secret society for catching horse thieves, recovering strays, buying supplies, and fighting monopolies of big cattlemen.[9]

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[8]Roscoe C. Martin, "The Greenback Party in Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXX (January, 1927), 161-178. The Greenback party candidate for governor in 1882 polled 102,501 votes against 150,891 for the Democratic candidate. No Republican total was given for 1882 so it is assumed that the Republicans voted with the Greenbackers. These vote totals are from Ernest William Winkler's Platforms of Political Parties in Texas, Bulletin of the University of Texas, No. 53, (Austin, September 20, 1916), 645.

[9]There are several versions of the Alliance's origin. John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt, A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1931), 115, and Solon Buck, The Agrarian Crusade, give slightly differing accounts. Hunt in Farmer Movements preferred the version given by Dr. C. W. Macune,

Though it originated in the farmer-stockmen conflict of the West Central counties where rangeland bordered farmland, it soon spread to farm communities all over the state, and became especially strong in areas where soil and terrain did not promote profitable farming. In 1878 a Grand State Alliance was organized and after much difficulty it was incorporated by the state as a secret and benevolent society. By 1885 it claimed twelve hundred lodges and fifty thousand members.[10]

The purpose of the Texas Alliance was proclaimed as "mental, moral, social and financial improvement" for farmers, which gave each lecturer in the field free rein to "make his own diagnosis of the ills of the economic society and to offer his own remedies."[11] The Alliance organization was set up to give full freedom of speech to each member and the discontented farmers sought eagerly to take advantage of this vocal vent. The lowest unit was the sub-alliance which could have not fewer members than five, male or female, white and over sixteen years of age. Farmers, farm laborers, country school teachers, country physicians, ministers of the gospel, stock

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the Texas Alliance's most influential president and organizer of the National Farmers' Alliance and Co-Operative Union of America, in his pamphlet, The Farmers' Alliance, 4. (This source was not available to the writer.)

[10] Ralph A. Smith, "The Farmers' Alliance in Texas, 1875-1900," Southwest Historical Quarterly, XLVIII No. 3, January, 1945, 346-369, and "Macuneism, or the Farmers of Texas in Business," Journal of Southern History, XIII, No. 2 (May, 1947) 221-245.

[11] Hunt, Farmer Movements, 30, quoting Macune.

raisers, mechanics, and mill hands were admitted to membership. Merchants were excluded (except those in the service of the Alliance) and so were lawyers. Women were exempt from paying dues, perhaps because they attended only special meetings of the sub-alliance.[12] The regular monthly meetings were stag gatherings where the business at hand was quickly dispatched and the members settled down to a discussion of the pressing problems of the day. Sometimes a speaker was provided, sometimes a debate scheduled, but always opinions were freely aired and every man had his chance to contribute. This is the type of meeting, as well as the summertime brush-arbor picnic, where young Pyle gained his early reputation as a speaker.

To combat the ruinous credit system, the Alliance set up its own co-operative stores as had the Grange, and also influenced its members to trade with merchants who gave the society a discount. County Trade Committees set up cotton yards and warehouses where Alliance cotton could be weighed, stored, and sold by members. The most ambitious venture of the Texas Alliance was the Farmers' Alliance Exchange which opened in Dallas in July, 1887, to handle cotton, grain, and farm implements for the membership. Unfortunately, at the

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[12]Constitution of the Farmers' State Alliance of Texas (Dallas, 1890), Article V, Section 1, quoted in Roscoe C. Martin, The People's Party in Texas, University of Texas Bulletin No. 3308 (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1933), 142.

insistence of the members, the Exchange tried to furnish supplies on credit, but the amount of subscribed capital stock was insufficient for such a tremendous business. Within less than three years the Exchange went into bankruptcy.[13]

This brief account of the Alliance Exchange is given to demonstrate the experience gained by Texas farmers in state-wide co-operative business ventures by the end of the century, and the impressions of such efforts they carried over into a later farm movement. The Grange co-operative stores had failed because of poor business methods and the State Alliance Exchange had failed for the same reason, in each case the underlying cause of failure being the entrenched credit system. The poorer farmers of Texas, conditioned to operate by this method, could not break their habit when their own buying and selling organization was substituted for the small-town furnishing merchant.[14]

The fiasco of the Exchange strengthened Pyle's conviction that all farm operations, from the smallest individual efforts to state-wide co-operative ventures, must be conducted according to strict business principles. Another lesson he stored in his memory was that of organizational scope. By combination with the Agricultural Wheel and other farm groups,

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[13]Clarence Ousley, "A Lesson in Co-Operation," Popular Science Monthly, XXXVI (April, 1890), 821-828.

[14]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 39.

the Alliance attained nation-wide influence and its "demands" for legislative action carried increasing weight. The successful farm organization should be national, with a firm purpose of benefiting all farmers--cotton, grain, tobacco, fruit, dairy--not just those of one section or one crop. Lasting benefits could come only from positive action through co-operation of all farmers and such action must be based on sound business methods, especially in pricing and marketing.[15]

Pyle, like many other "liberals" of the time, saw much merit in the Alliance sub-treasury scheme, which would provide better marketing conditions for staple crops and a more flexible circulation of money in agricultural channels.[16] This plan became the crux of a tense situation in Texas that supplied fertile soil for the growth of a new political party. In 1890, largely through the support of farmers, Attorney-General James Stephen Hogg was elected governor on his promise to submit to the people a constitutional amendment making possible the establishment of a railroad commission for rate

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[15]This is the basic theme of all Pyle's editorials on farm problems in the files of his newspapers now available for study.

[16]Thanks to the Warehouse Act of 1916, certain provisions of the Federal Reserve Act of 1914, the farm loan banks created by an act of 1916, the federal intermediate credit banks established by an act of 1923, and the Ever-Normal Granary Act of 1938, the farmer finally received the benefits conservatives labeled socialistic when presented in the sub-treasury plan.

regulation and general supervision of the activities of these arrogant and law-defying railroad corporations within Texas boundaries. The amendment passed, but Hogg failed to appoint either an Alliance or a Grange leader to the new commission. The farmers became impatient of the commission's progress and felt they had been betrayed by the governor and the Democratic party of Texas.[17] A schism developed in the Legislature over the policies of the new administration, but for political reasons it was made to appear that the cause of the fight was the sub-treasury plan. In the fall of 1891 the State Democratic Executive Committee formally pronounced that a sub-treasury supporter could not claim membership in the Democratic party, thus splitting the Alliance between those who elected to remain in the old party and those who recommended independent political action.[18]

A ready-made party awaited the rebels--the People's party, which had been organized in Comanche County in 1886, with tacit Alliance approval, for the purpose of ousting an entrenched Democratic machine. This movement had spread and become informally the People's party of Texas, finding quick acceptance in Erath, Tarrant, and many other counties where similar organizations had spontaneously erupted between

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[17]Martin, People's Party, 27.

[18]Ibid., 33-40.

1886 and 1890. The rank and file of these independent voters were farmers, the majority of them Alliance men, and Alliance leaders were prominent in various conventions that were held in these years for the purpose of nominating non-partisan candidates. The post-Civil War conviction that only a blackguard would vote other than the Democratic ticket was no longer pervasive, and a deep-seated dissatisfaction was welling up among agrarians, who felt the old party had deserted them. This willingness to break party ties would have assumed larger proportions in 1890 had not the Democrats nominated Hogg for governor and accepted many "demands" of the Alliance program; therefore, the events of 1891 merely supplied the final impetus that turned thousands of Alliance-Democrats into Populists.[19]

In the local suballiance the Populist organizer found a receptive audience. Indeed, so many Alliance members were willing converts to the new Third party that often they alone comprised the local reform club. In many instances the sub-

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[19]Ibid., 31-34. In much the same pattern of spontaneous local activity Populism arose in other states and local groups amalgamated into state organizations. The first national convention of the People's party met in Cincinnati in May, 1891, adopted a Jacksonian slogan of "Equal rights for all and special privileges to none," and drew up a platform which was almost verbatim the National Farmers' Alliance's list of "demands." Hicks, Populist Revolt, and Carl C. Taylor, The Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920 (New York, 1957), give comprehensive accounts of the part Alliance men played in Populism. Chapter XII of the latter lists the best sources on the subject for each of the thirteen states where Populism flourished.

alliance would assemble to hear a lecture in closed meeting, after which the doors would be opened to the public and the same lecturer would speak and organize for the Populist party. The new party took advantage of the organizational plan of the Alliance, i.e., school district or precinct, county, district, region, and state, and profited greatly by the esprit de corps already developed in the unit cell or suballiance.[20]

Although there were many urban laboring men in the ranks of Texas Populism, the bulk of the membership was drawn from farms and ranches, especially in counties where the Farmers' Alliance was strong. Furthermore, the majority of Texas Populists were in the poorer rank of farmers, a fact that has been graphically demonstrated on the map by county vote in the years when the Third party had candidates in the field.[21] The most comprehensive study of the movement revealed, also, that many of the Populists of Texas were of a strongly religious turn of mind. The leading conservative newspaper of the state described them as "...solid, native, white stock, sober and earnest from first to last. Their earnestness, bordering on religious fanaticism, has a touch of the kind of metal that made Cromwell's round heads so

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[20]Martin, People's Party, 142-146.

[21]Ibid., 60-61.

terrible a force...It would be supreme folly to despise and belittle a movement that is leavened with such moral stuff as this."[22]

Actually a high percentage of Populist leaders in Texas were ordained ministers, and those who were not realized the value of the religious appeal. As political thought has been expressed in other times in philosophy, law, or sociology, so the framework of Texas Populism was religion. Divine aid for the Party's enterprises was invoked in prayer and Scriptural texts were freely quoted to substantiate arguments. Perhaps it was a defense mechanism built up in a generation that felt itself wronged by forces of evil, that felt God must surely be on their side, for the People's party became a semi-religious order, its members crusading for the cause of economic and social justice.[23]

Although "the gospel of Populism" was spread in speeches and writings throughout the year, nowhere was the religious emphasis so evident or the propaganda methods so effective as in the summer campmeeting which, originating as a religious festival, was appropriated in turn by the Alliance and the People's party. Farm families came many miles to camp for several days in mid-summer while the cotton was "mak-

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[22]Ibid., 85, quoting the Dallas Morning News, June 25, 1892.

[23]Ibid., 165.

ing the boll." They enjoyed the social nature of the meeting but the chief purpose was to gain spiritual inspiration from hearing Populist principles expounded in a revival-like atmosphere. Political speeches were interspersed with prayers, hymns, and educational talks; Populist literature was read and discussed, and the comradeship of the fraternal order prevailed.[24]

Every Populist state leader of consequence attended the larger campmeetings, and usually the program committee was able to book an out-of-state speaker with a national reputation, such as General James B. Weaver, Governor Davis H. Waite of Colorado, "General" Jacob S. Coxey of the "march to Washington" fame, Mrs. Mary E. Lease of Kansas, or "Sockless" Jerry Simpson.[25]

Texas produced many speakers expert in "spreading the gospel of Populism," but two especially won national fame by their excoriations. One of these was James H. Davis, who won

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[24] Ibid., 170-172. Martin drew his excellent description of these meetings from news stories and articles in the Dallas Morning News and the Southern Mercury, organ of the Alliance, which was published in Dallas. A. B. Cain of Alba stated to the writer that O. P. Pyle was in demand as a speaker at campmeetings in Northeast Texas, and particularly remembered a speech Pyle made at a big meeting in Grand Saline, five miles west of Mineola.

[25] Ibid., 171. Martin, quoting Southern Mercury, August 29, 1895: "Crowds of from 5,000 to 7,000 were not exceptional, and Mrs. Lease addressed a gathering estimated at 15,000 to 20,000 in Hunt County in 1895."

the nickname "Cyclone" from newspaper mentions of the "cyclones of applause" he received.[26] Second only to Davis as a public speaker was Harrison Sterling Price Ashby, nicknamed "Stump," who had been a minister, cowboy, actor, schoolteacher, and farmer before becoming an Alliance and Populist orator.[27]

Many of these lecturers, including Cyclone Davis, were also newspaper men, as there seemed to be an affinity between orating and editing. In 1892 seventeen Alliance weeklies were being published in Texas, four of them listed as Populist in political preference. By 1895 ten papers were standing by the Alliance and there were seventy-five confessedly Populist papers being published all over the eastern half of the state. All eighty-five were weeklies, and all went principally into farm homes to be read and passed along to neighbors. The subscription list seldom totaled over one thousand, financial difficulties usually beset the editor-publisher, and inexperience in the newspaper business caused frequent changes of ownership. Many of these papers were established for the sole purpose of promoting the Alliance or the People's party, and when the "cause" faded out the papers ceased to publish. Others were established to

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[26]Ibid., 121. Newspapers in other states referred to him as "The Cyclone from Texas."

[27]Ibid., 123-125.

serve exclusively one phase of the Reform movement or as a mouthpiece for one political campaign. Still other papers took solid hold upon their subscribers' interest and, blessed by an editor-publisher who knew and loved the game, continued to serve the journalistic needs of an area for many years after Populism died out. Such papers were ready and eager to promote the farmers' interests when the next agrarian organization was born.[28]

The Mineola Courier was a prime example of the Alliance-Populist newspapers in the latter classification, but without the leadership of O. P. Pyle it probably would have died out with the society that founded it.[29] Its main asset when Pyle took it over in 1894 was its ready-made audience of Alliance members and Populists, but it had stiff competition for subscriptions and advertising from the Mineola Monitor, a conservative, Democratic weekly that had held unchallenged dominion over that trade area long before the Courier began. Pyle brought to the young paper tremendous enthusiasm and his characteristic energetic drive. He quickly

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[28]Ibid., 189-209. Chapter VIII, The Reform Press, gives a detailed survey of Alliance-Populist papers in Texas.

[29]It cannot be ascertained how the Mineola Courier changed ownership from the Alliance to Pyle. Judge Boyd suggested that the Wood County Alliance deeded Pyle the paper in return for a cash sum and his assumption of the remaining notes, if any, on the equipment. The Courier was published without interruption until Pyle sold it in 1908.

mastered the processes of type-setting and composing, although he never developed a flair for mechanics. With the assistance of one printer who could do anything required in the small plant, and the services of a good-natured giant of a Negro named Cicero, who performed the more menial tasks such as turning the crank of the hand-operated, flat-bed press, Pyle "got out" the Courier every Thursday.[30]

It was a formidable struggle to build up circulation in a period when depression stalked the land and prospective readers found it difficult to part with one dollar for a year's subscription. When money is scarce, people turn to the time-worn method of barter and many a farmer came around to the print shop on Saturday afternoon with a bucket of ribbon-cane syrup, a side of "hog-meat," bushels of corn for the editor's horse, or a promise to deliver a pound of fresh butter every week.[31] The new editor soon won the friendship of local merchants who took as much advertising space as they could afford, but, as with all small-town weeklies of the time, the chief source of revenue was patent medicine

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[30]C. E. Revelle, interviews, August 27, 1956, and June 7, 1957. Mr. Revelle was a close friend of Pyle and was in the Courier office daily.

[31]Ellie Reaves, interview, August 27, 1956. Lawyer Reaves was a close friend of Pyle and was acquainted with his personal affairs. Judge Ewing Boyd confirms the fact that no matter how short of cash the country editor in those days might find himself, he could usually "set a good table."

advertising. Pyle would not accept liquor ads. He was a prohibitionist and had a firm policy of publishing nothing that would injure morals or pose a threat to happy home-life.[32]

The young publisher's greatest aid in building circulation was his constant contact with prospective readers through his speaking engagements. They liked his Alliance lectures and Populist rally speeches: they would enjoy his editorials. The one activity paid dividends in the other, just as his speaking had brought, and continued to bring, prospects for insurance sales.

The Mineola Courier began to reach farm homes in adjoining counties, and editors of other papers began to publish excerpts from its editorial columns. Pyle used far less boiler-plate material than was found in most country weeklies of the day, and his paper consequently contained more original thought and more "quotable" items. The paste pot and shears were almost as important equipment as the type itself when a country editor made up his paper, for it was common practice to print paragraphs or whole articles from other papers and answer the charges or comment on the contents in the

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[32]National Co-Operator, July 11, 1906, editorial: "We shall continue, as we have always done, to refuse all whiskey ads. Co-Operator...is not willing to advertise anything in the home which tends to destroy the home and good home influences."

space following. This method not only filled columns, but editors who were clever at this "battle of the shears" could work up reader interest to a high pitch, and no doubt there was tacit agreement to keep the pot boiling.[33] The following paragraphs from the Alliance-Populist Courier and the Wood County Democrat demonstrate this bandying of invective early in the political campaign of 1894:

Democrat:

> The Mineola Courier has had its vials of wrath uncorked and its flow of billingsgate is excessive and feculent.
>
> The Pops accuse the democrats of division and inconsistency; but if they want to learn all about the practice of these things they should study up on the acts and opinions of their own leaders. The only things in which they are a unit is to destroy democracy and get the offices.

Courier:

> So, our hatchet-faced democratic contemporary at the county capital would like to have the Courier boy-cotted. As the Democrat sets up a claim to being the official organ, we wonder if its utterances are inspired. We have no doubt that the Courier is a thorn in the democratic flesh, but it is a thorn that will keep progging deeper as the campaign progresses, and in November it will assist in pinning the Democratic hide on the wall.

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[33]Judge Boyd supplied the writer with this information about the Courier, and about country weeklies in general, from his experience in working on his father's paper in Cooper.

Democrat:

The above is one of the several pleasant allusions to the Democrat in last week's Courier, occassioned by the statement made by the Democrat that that sheet could not live without Democratic support; and that fact remains undisputed. It is no boycott to quarantine against a pestilence and it is just as good doctrine to abate nuisances for the health of the body politic as it is to abate them for physical health...The Courier says it is a thorn in the Democratic flesh, and the Democrat would have it removed instead of being permitted to remain and fester and form a fungus growth that would eat away the vitality and not add one thing to the sustenance of the body from which it draws its nourishment.

Courier:

Speaking of boycotting the Courier makes us remember that the lawyers are the only class who have never given the paper any advertising patronage, but the Populists, you know, are good people and never get into the courts. And, then, the lawyers are all democrats and constantly expecting official lightning to strike them in some spot, hence, it keeps them constantly busted to keep Padon [the Democrat's editor] and his three democratic confreres on their feet. They are carrying a jackass load as it is and we excuse them.

Democrat:

It is not the business of the Democrat to defend the lawyers; but from this dreadful charge it must exhonorate [sic] them...The Democrat does not ask nor expect their assistance only in such way as it suits them to give it business. But that Mineola Cesspool [sic] is in a state of ferment and it can not be expected to emit any but fetid odors.[34]

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[34]Wood County Democrat, July 27, 1950. The paragraphs quoted here were printed in an article in the Centennial

This was a time of emotional unrestraint when men expressed themselves with violence even on uncontroversial subjects. In the election years of 1894 and 1896 probably every editor in Texas was vulnerable to libel suits, for it would be hard to imagine a more partisan policy than they pursued, each expressing "the truth" as he saw it.[35] It was customary for an editor to keep a revolver in his desk drawer, for he never knew when an irate and armed reader might descend on the newspaper office loaded with invective and liquor. With such a torrent of vitriolic accusations and abusive language filling the columns, it is not surprising that sometimes a fracas ended in tragedy, such as that in Sulphur Springs in the fall of 1891 when rival journalists fought a pistol duel, the Democrat being wounded and the Reform editor slain.[36]

Edition concerning Alfred Padon, first editor of the Democrat, and illustrating the brand of "firy [sic] editorials" he wrote. This paper is still published in Quitman, Texas. According to the present owner, files of the paper from 1890 to 1910 are "hot available." The Courier files were destroyed by fire many years ago, but from comments of those who read his paper regularly it is obvious that Pyle did not indulge in such offenses of good taste as did his predecessor.

[35]Martin, People's Party, 205, 206. Violent and abusive language was the rule in publications all over the country in those years. It is rather startling to read the references to William Jennings Bryan in the conservative Harper's Weekly in the summer and fall of 1896.

[36]Martin, People's Party, 207-208, quoting the Jacksboro Gazette, September 24, 1891.

Tension ran high wherever men gathered for political rallies, especially if a debate between a Democrat and a Populist was scheduled, and it was not uncommon to count a dozen or more pistols in plain view at such meetings in the Mineola Opera House.[37] The Reform movement divided friends of long standing and even members of a family, as witness the case in Alba of two brothers running for State Representative, one on the Populist ticket and the other on the Democratic ticket.[38]

Pyle managed to avoid physical altercations during this period of inflamed political passions and short tempers, for it was against his Christian principles to indulge in personal violence; but he let it be known that his desk drawer in the Courier office contained an "equalizer." During one particularly "hot" election campaign, threats were made against his life. When he had to take several train trips to fulfill speaking engagements, he formed the habit of placing his open valise by his right foot, his revolver glinting unmistakably upon a white shirt. This interesting object was in full view of those who passed along the aisle while the editor calmly composed editorials on a pad of copy paper, polished his impending speech, or

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[37] J. W. Bogan described such a scene to the writer.

[38] Ellie Reaves mentioned this and several other instances of unhappy division.

talked with friends.[39]

To grasp the desperation of farmers and laboring men as the election of 1896 approached, one must review the discouraging events of Cleveland's second term, which topped off a generation of social and economic deterioration of these two large classes. The country was divided between the "haves" and the "have nots," and the cleavage crossed sectional lines and party lines, bringing the Union to the brink of revolution. As the depression deepened, the inelastic currency system and the inadequate supply of gold in a rapidly expanding industrial nation rightly received the severest criticism, but the "free silver" cure-all that attracted the fanatical support of millions was the wrong prescription for the sick economy. It ignored Gresham's law, but it sounded fool-proof when explained by the silver tongue of William Jennings Bryan.

Hoards of those who heard Bryan on his speaking tours succumbed completely to his charm, his tremendous oratorical powers, and the moral tone of his message.[40] He preached

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[39]The writer's mother told this story of the gun in the drawer and in the valise. She also kept a pistol to fire into the air two or three times from the back porch on Saturday nights when Pyle was out of town, as a warning to the drunken rowdies who promenaded up and down the alley on the other side of the solid, six-foot, board fence. She did this with the approval of the Mineola constable, Henry Willingham.

[40]The writer has talked with several people who heard Bryan in his prime and in each case noted a worshipful expression and extravagant words of praise.

"free silver" like an evangelist preaching salvation. He proclaimed Populism under a Democratic label, and so effective was his appeal that many Populists were lured back into the Democratic fold. Editor Pyle described Bryan's legerdemain in these words:

> ...In 1896...we could not talk above a whisper, so much did we yell for him. Thought he was the savior of the country...When, in a great speech before the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1896, Bryan declared, "You shall not press this crown of thorns upon the brow of labor, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold," the convention went wild and the nomination was his...
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> In April, 1896, General Jas. B. Weaver, of Iowa, who was the Populist candidate for the presidency in 1892 and for whom Bryan voted, told this writer that if Bryan failed to get the nomination at the Democratic convention at Chicago, he would go on down to St. Louis and take the Populist nomination straight, two weeks later. The General said that this trade had been made with the Populist national committee of which he was the leading spirit. Bryan got it at Chicago and at St. Louis, too.
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> Bryan said in a speech in Terrell, Texas, in May, 1896, that if the Chicago convention made a gold standard platform he would bolt. It made a free silver platform and Bryan was nominated.[41]

Pyle was one of the many Populists who returned to the Democratic fold, led by Pied Piper Bryan, piping upon a silver whistle. Like General Weaver and many of the Populist national leaders, he felt that Bryan could win the election

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[41]Editorial in the Belton Journal, July 17, 1919. Pyle owned and edited this paper from June 1, 1911, until his death in November, 1919.

with a fusion vote of Populists and Democrats, and he believed that Bryan as president would see that most of their reforms were put into law. He seems to have been completely won over to the "Silver Democrats" principally by the personality of William Jennings Bryan. The succeeding years gave him perspective to evaluate Bryan's appeal,[42] but in the emotion-charged mid-nineties it is not surprising that his warmly sentimental, benevolent nature should respond heartily to "the great crusader."

Having made his decision to return to the Democratic party, Editor Pyle did not have to wait long for formal recognition of his change of heart. A Democratic joint convention was called for precinct, county, and district to meet in Sulphur Springs in July, 1896, to further the candidacy of Judge John L. Shepherd for United States Representative. Amos Beatty (later president of The Texas Company), Hopkins County Democratic Chairman Ewing Boyd, Congressman DeGraffin Reed, and

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[42]The editorial continued: "How deceived a man can be... What would be done to him if he should make such a speech now? Some delegate from Texas would move to send him to the insane asylum. And yet 1896 was not so long ago...But his 'Crown of Thorns and Cross of Gold' oratory would get him nowhere now. How strange! How times do change...But, nevertheless, after all is said and done, Bryan is, and has been for many years, one of the great citizens of this country. He is the greatest crusader this country has ever produced and many of the principles, though unpopular, which he has advocated, will yet come to be a blessing to mankind. We are glad that Bryan came on the stage of action just when he did." Ibid.

Judge Shepherd each spoke for thirty minutes. Although this rally took place in Cyclone Davis' home-town where he published a paper, the Arrangements Committee detailed a constable to make sure that Davis did not sit on the speakers' platform. Pyle, on the other hand, was invited to sit with the speakers and the Democratic party leaders made a show of "welcoming him back into the White Man's party."[43]

Judge Boyd gives this explanation of the return of Populists to Texas Democracy: Populism was for the underdogs and the Negroes were "under the underdogs." The Populist party in Northeast Texas became "entirely too full of Negroes." This, together with Bryan's appeal, brought ex-Democrats back to the old party but the Democratic leaders were "choosy" about whom they welcomed back. Davis had made himself obnoxious to the party leaders, so they made him wait quite a while. Men like Pyle, however, were "too valuable to do without." Judge Boyd labels Pyle as "progressive but not radical," and says that he was "thirty years ahead of the times" in his support of prohibition and woman suffrage. There was political expediency involved, for Pyle "had a personal following the Democratic party needed."[44]

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[43]Judge Boyd, interview March 3, 1957. The judge has a photographic memory for events of the 'nineties. He gave the writer a description of this exciting evening that was replete with colorful details.

[44]Ibid., For Cyclone Davis' own analysis of Populist

Bryan's defeat was a severe disappointment to the young editor-farmer, as it was to so many agrarians before they realized that "the Great Commoner" had not really carried their banner in his campaign. The excitement of the election died down and Pyle was able to give more of his attention to his family and business. The Courier continued to produce a modest income, which its owner augmented with proceeds from his farm and from an occasional real estate deal. In the last years of the century Pyle was much in demand as a speaker at church, community, and political gatherings, and he enjoyed acting as drum major for the twenty-three-piece Merchants Band of Mineola, a role for which his height made him eminently suitable.[45] It was in this period that he began to gain weight, as attested by the minutes of the annual Pyle family reunion held at Clinton in July, 1897. It was reported that O. P. Pyle gave a burlesque oration, "...a side-splitter. He made excuses for not having a better speech. He said he had not been in good health for the last two months, and the doctor said his complaint was that everything he ate flew to his stomach."[46]

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aims and accomplishments, see Appendix B, letter from Davis to Pyle.

[45]C. E. Revelle, letter to the writer, April 4, 1957. The writer has two pictures of this band, in one of which the members and drum major are resplendent in white uniforms.

[46]Pyle Family Record Book.

There was nothing Pink Pyle loved better than to be in the midst of his brothers and sisters or to have several of the Gibson girls visiting in his home. There was usually one or more young persons from either of the families living with Pink and Susie and going to school, and he was always generous with his time in helping with lessons. The friendship between Pyle and his father-in-law deepened year by year. Zachary Gibson was a most modern farmer for his day in that he studied every scientific pamphlet on farming that he could obtain and thought up new methods and gadgets to improve old ways. Diversification was a by-word with him, and he raised many fruits and vegetables his neighbors never attempted to raise. He was usually the first in his vicinity to buy new, labor-saving equipment for both field and house, and he and Sarah spent much of their time teaching and helping neighbors to make the most of their resources. Gibson's "advanced" farming methods were not idle theories, for his land actually produced more income per acre than the time-worn, habit-bound farms where cotton and corn were the inevitable crops. As often as possible, Pink and Susie and the children rode the "Katy" up to Alba (six miles) to visit the Gibsons, and the two men found time for long discussions of farming problems.[47]

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[47]The writer heard descriptions of the Gibson farm and of Zachary and Sarah's energetic and useful lives from her mother and from her aunts, especially from Jettie Gibson (Mrs. E. C. Wier) who married later than the other girls and worked

Returning one Sunday night from such a week-end visit, the Pyle family found their Mineola home burned to the ground, wedding gifts and everything accumulated in several years of marriage completely destroyed. This was a severe financial setback for the young couple, but they bore this, as they bore far more shattering blows, with faith and courage. The grief they suffered at the loss of their second son in October, 1897, was somewhat assuaged by the birth of another boy on August 23, 1898, whom they named Vernon Pinkney. Little Vernon was a beautiful child, mentally bright and perfectly formed, but an injury at birth left him with very poor muscular control.[48]

Both Populism and the Farmers' Alliance declined rapidly in Texas after the election of 1896. A few chapters of the Alliance and of the Grange continued to meet, but their influence was no longer felt outside their own small membership. Although the price of cotton--the best index to

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more closely with her father. She described a storage house he designed and had built, which was so well insulated that meat, eggs, butter, cheese, and milk stayed fresh in it in the Texas summer heat. Mrs. Wier died March 3, 1953. The writer also remembers stories her grandmother, Sarah McChristian Gibson, told of teaching neighbor women to use her sewing machine, teaching them how to be sanitary in working with milk and butter, how to can fruit, meat, and vegetables, and how to care for sick children.

[48]Vernon died October 3, 1905. His parents never gave up hope of helping him to live a normal life, and took him to many doctors, but nothing could be done for spastic children in those days.

the Texas farmer's economic status--was at its lowest level, organized protest against the farmer's unsolved problems was weaker than in a generation past. Dr. Hunt has suggested that perhaps the man behind the plow was simply exhausted by the successive waves of reform that had followed so closely one upon the other, and needed a period of inactivity in which to digest his experiences and recover from "loss of faith in the various nostrums that had been advocated."[49] Whatever the cause may have been, there was a vacuum of leadership and of activity on behalf of the farmer for six years.[50]

This situation did not halt Editor Pyle in his personal crusade for the farmer, but merely limited his field of action to the editorial pages of the paper. He continued to stress the need for applying common-sense business methods to all farm operations, and the need for co-operation in price-setting and marketing.[51] When the time was ripe for another organized effort, he was ready with experience and unflagging zeal.

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[49]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 41.

[50]Dr. Carl C. Taylor sees the struggle of the farmer to catch step with the changing price and market economy as one continuous movement marked by high tides that correspond to periods of economic and political stress in our country's history--up to 1900. The period between 1896 and 1902 he sees as a period of low tide as to activity but one of great significance in the development of a new "public" to reflect the arguments, philosophies, or prejudices centering about the American Farmers' Movement. Taylor, Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920, 335, 336, 490-500.

[51]Pyle letter, Texas Farmer, January 20, 1906.

CHAPTER III

The year 1900 seemed to mark a turning point leading to better times for the Texas farmer, and the next fourteen years brought him economic certainty and security such as he had not known for many years past.[1] The price for cotton was steadily advancing at about the rate of 1¢ per pound per year, which made the Texas farmer hopeful if not satisfied.

Times were good for the Mineola Courier's editor, too. The paper was making money steadily if not spectacularly and life was pleasant with much visiting, entertaining, and excursions to Galveston Beach or to Dallas for the State Fair, and in the summer of 1901 the editor and his wife went to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. This was the first trip across the country for either of them and it left memories to treasure.[2] Pyle was very active in politics in this period, making countless trips about the state to con-

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[1]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 41-43.

[2]The writer's mother told many stories of this happy trip, which was a sort of honeymoon ten and a half years late. Pyle at this time weighed slightly over three hundred pounds, his wife about ninety-five. Her only unpleasant experience on this trip occurred on the tiny, narrow-gauge, excursion-car that ran along the precipice of the Niagara Gorge. Pyle, to tease her, insisted on riding on the outer side and she was sure every minute the car would tip over into the foaming rapids. Shortly after that he reduced to around two hundred and forty pounds, which was his normal weight from that time on.

ventions and committee meetings, and delivering speeches for his candidates on campaign tours.[3] Travel expense never posed a problem, for the editor received from the railroads "scrip" as payment for advertising space. The ticket agent tore off a length of the perforated, folded, printed "scrip" and gave the editor a ticket in return.[4]

At a press convention in Corsicana in the summer of 1900, Pyle met Isaac Newton Gresham, editor of the Hunt County Observer of Greenville, Texas. It is quite possible that these two who had been Alliance lecturers and Populists had known each other in the hectic early 'nineties, but, if that was the case, they had been but casual acquaintances. After this meeting in 1900 they became warm friends--"like Damon and Pythias," as Gresham's daughter expresses it--and each visited in the other's home as often as possible.[5]

Gresham was nearly ten years older than Pyle. He was born near Florence, Alabama, February 20, 1858, was orphaned at ten, and lived for several years with an older brother. In 1876 he came to Texas and worked for another brother who

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[3]Judge Ewing Boyd, interview, March 3, 1957.

[4]This was a customary method of exchanging service--advertising for train fare. The writer's family traveled by this means until the family newspaper was sold in 1925.

[5]Mrs. Lutie Gresham Templeton, letter to the writer, February 11, 1957. The writer's sister, Mrs. A. D. Dyess, Sr., recalls that Gresham visited in the Pyle home in Mineola many times in the succeeding years.

had already established himself on a farm near Granbury. Young Newt had not been able to go to school regularly, but he longed for education and read all the books and magazines he could borrow. In the late 'seventies he attended Add-Ran College in Thorp Springs for one year,[6] and thereafter continued to read extensively. On January 13, 1881, he married Ida May Peters and they farmed rented land in Hood County. He joined the Farmer's Alliance, was a member of Brushy Creek suballiance for a time, and then was elected an organizer and sent to Tennessee and Alabama in 1886. Mrs. Gresham accompanied her husband on his travels and for four years they devoted their lives to this work, returning to Texas in 1890. They rented a large farm in Hood County from Col. W. L. McGaughey, ex-Confederate soldier who was elected Commissioner of the General Land Office that year.

Gresham was doing as well financially for his family as could be expected under conditions prevailing in the 'nineties but he could not relinquish his urge to be of service to his fellow-farmers. He had worked hard, though unsuccessfully, in 1894 to elect Clarence Nugent, the Populist candidate, governor of Texas, and in 1896 had returned to the Demo-

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[6]Add-Ran College took its name from its founders, two brothers, Addison and Randolph Clark. It was a small school sponsored by the Disciples of Christ and, through later expansion, it became Texas Christian University.

cratic fold through admiration for Bryan. The events of these years had but emphasized the farm problems, not solved them, and Gresham wanted a medium through which to reach the farmers and tell them "the truth as he saw it." In 1897 he moved his wife and three children to Granbury and bought half-interest in a small paper which he named the Graphic Truth. Within a year he bought out his partner, Ashly Crockett, grandson of the famous Davy Crocket, but when Gresham began to check his subscription list, he found Crockett had transferred all the names to a new paper he, Crockett, was starting. The sale between the partners had included the subscription list, of course, a fact which Gresham proved in court and recovered the subscription books.[7] He felt so strongly that his readers should continue to receive the message in his paper, that he never took a person off the mailing list, and accepted potatoes, popcorn, peanuts, pecans, chickens, fence rails, or almost anything usuable in payment of the modest subscription fee.[8]

In 1900 Gresham sold the Graphic Truth, moved to Greenville, and bought the Hunt County Observer. In its plant he

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[7]Mrs. Templeton, letters to the writer, March 1, 1957, and April 1, 1957, relating the story of her father's life up to 1902.

[8]Mrs. Templeton and her brother, Ferris Gresham, of Tucson, Arizona, interview, June 8, 1957, at Mrs. Templeton's farm home near Brashear, Texas.

also published a little weekly, the Point Enterprise, for distribution in the area about the village of Point in Rains County, a few miles south of Greenville.[9] After a short while he moved to Point and began to publish there a little country paper called the Point Times. Here he did not do well financially. Rains County, one of the smallest in Texas, was not prosperous and in 1900 approximately one-half of the farmers were tenants. Less than one-tenth of the population were Negro and the great majority were of old Southern stock. Rains County people had been very active politically and had furnished many campaigners for the Populist party in its heyday. The political temper ranged from "brass-collar Democrats" to Socialists, and political debate was one of the chief forms of recreation. This was fertile soil for a new farm organization.[10]

From the beginning of his newspaper career, Gresham had been working on plans for a new farm organization but had not succeeded in stirring up any interest among his acquaintances. Shortly after he met Pyle, he explained his ideas and Pyle immediately gave him encouragement. Gresham's daugh-

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[9]Ibid.; Mrs. Templeton and her brother told of folding these two papers by hand and of delivering the Point area paper by horseback.

[10]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 46, 47, analyzes this area as to physical features and political temper.

ter said of this meeting of minds: "No one else thought his ideas were worth the effort. They pointed to the Alliance and Grange, which at one time had flourished throughout the South. What could a little old two-by-four country editor do anyway?"[11] But Pyle saw merit in Gresham's plan and the two men found they had similar ideas on the pressing need for business methods in farming and for co-operation between farmers for protection of their interests.

Gresham worked on his outline of organization, drawing on his experience in the Alliance and his knowledge of the Grange, striving to express the sentiments he felt so deeply in a plea to the farmer to enter once more into a brotherhood of co-operation. In countless long and earnest conversations he discussed these problems with Pyle, who lent advice from his own experience in composition and in secret, benevolent orders. The two shared a humanitarian motivation in their sincere desire to better the farmer's living and working conditions; both had known back-breaking toil in the fields and wanted to see the farmer receive the greatest possible return for his hard labor. Like Pyle, Gresham, was a religious man

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[11] Ibid., 46. Mrs. Templeton states that Pyle's encouragement and help made the difference between success and failure in her father's effort to get his plan under way. Each of the four charter members still living in the early 1930's when Dr. Hunt sought information for his book gave a different version of how the Union began, but his conclusion was that Gresham planned it and whipped it into form. Ibid., 52.

O. P. Pyle with eight charter members and two organizers of the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union, Emory, Texas, 1903.

Front row: O. H. Rhodes, W. S. Sisk, J. B. Morris, Dr. Lee Seamster, Newt Gresham, W.T. Cochran
Back row: Jessie Adams, Alfred M. Colwick, O. P. Pyle, W. T. Loudermilk, T. W. Donaldson

and both were devoted to the Disciples of Christ movement. In temperament they were complementary, for Pyle had a restless, driving ego with seemingly limitless energy, while Gresham was more the "thinker" than the "doer."[12]

By September 17, 1902, plans for the new organization had crystalized to the point that ten directors had been chosen and a state charter applied for as "The Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union of America." These ten men were employed as follows: one newspaper man (Gresham), one county clerk (O. H. Rhodes), one physician (Dr. Lee Seamster), one country school teacher (J. S. Turner), and six farmers (W. T. Cochran, T. J. Pound, J. B. Morris, T. W. Donaldson, Jessie Adams, and W. S. Sisk). All except Gresham lived in or near Emory, Rains County seat, a town seven miles from Point.[13] Pyle was not a charter member because it was thought best not to have two newspaper men on the list and because of a wish to avoid association of the new organization with Populism. Actually, of the ten charter members five were

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[12]Mrs. Dyess remembers Gresham as a quiet, gentle man, slow and deliberate in his movements, and Mrs. Templeton confirmed this description in conversation with the writer. In a letter to the writer dated February 11, 1957, Mrs. Templeton stated: "Mr. Pyle had the most wonderful personality--he was generous to a fault, and comparing his financial status with the Gresham family--well, we were poor in worldly goods. It was the man and the character that counted with him."

[13]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 49.

Democrats, one an Independent, one a Socialist, and three were Populists (the party was still putting candidates in the field), but none of the latter three had been before the public as had Pyle. For the past six years Pyle had been an active "Bryan Democrat," but it took a long time for the Populist taint to wear off in the public mind. It was not a question of disavowing the Populist aims, which were still vital in the interest of the farmer, but rather it was a scrupulous effort to avoid political connection of any kind.[14]

Pyle officially joined the Union in December, 1902, and "began to plan making of the organization a business one, rather than political."[15] His aim, and Gresham's too, was to avoid the pitfalls into which earlier farm organizations of Texas had fallen: involvement in politics, dissension between "dirt farmers" and "town members," and inefficient methods in organizing and business dealings. No secret was made of the debt owed to the earlier farm groups; in fact the constitution paid tribute to them in the following exordium:

We, the charter members of this co-operative

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[14]Ibid., 51. In conversation with the writer at A. & M. College on August 1, 1956, Dr. Hunt stated his opinion that Pyle chose not to be a charter member of the Union because he was the only one of the organizing group who had a public reputation and wide political following--not for himself but for the candidates of his choice--and he was determined not to bring criticism on the infant Union as a new political movement.

[15]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 404.

> Union, have already lived to see the Grange rise like a giant, then wither like the grass, even before the day was half spent. We rejoiced in the birth of the once glorius Farmers' Alliance, and we witnessed the first revolution of the Agricultural Wheel, and then wept as we saw the two laid to rest, side by side, in the same premature grave. From these we have learned a simple lesson. The simple lesson we have learned is this: as all institutions must come up from small beginnings and profit by the experience of past ages, even so do we propose to take lessons from those institutions that have passed into history. Ultimate success is not gained at a single bound in any great movement. The world moves by inches. Because the Grange, Farmers' Alliance, and all the other kindred movements failed to reach the goal of final success, does that mean that we must forever give it up? Twenty years have passed into history since the Farmer's Alliance first saw light. It is now our opinion that the time is fully ripe for the launching of another great institution... [16]

In the early 1930's Robert Lee Hunt talked with all the surviving charter members of the Farmers' Union and with many organizers and ordinary members in collecting material for his comprehensive history of this movement in Texas. From this store of individual memories and impressions, he made the following estimate:

> Fully ten years had passed following the collapse of the Farmers' Alliance before the Farmers' Union was born. However, during this ten-year interval, many old leaders in the other agricultural crusades never forgot the possibilities of farmer organizations. Many refused to have their faith shaken just because the farmers had

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[16]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 44, quoting from the Introduction to one of the first printed constitutions and by-laws of the Farmers' Union.

> more or less failed in previous attempts. It is quite evident now that there were two classes of men who continued to dream dreams of new conquests. One class believed that it was necessary for farmers to organize in order to improve their economic status. This class had faith in such organizations as the Grange and the Alliance, and were sincere in their expressed opinions. The other class were opportunists who believed such an organization as the Alliance would lead to possibilities of graft or political preference. This class was scanning the horizon for any signs of a new army of farmers. [17]

In the first class were Newt Gresham and O. P. Pyle, whose sincere dedication to the agrarian cause in time subjected them to attacks from men in the other class. These attacks were founded chiefly on jealousy and arose from the very pitfalls these two men had hoped the Union could avoid.[18] Some of the difficulties in which the Union later became embroiled had their beginnings in the early days of organizatinn.

As all of the charter members except Gresham lived in or near Emory, the first meetings were held there. The constitution and by-laws as written by Gresham were discussed, revised somewhat, and approved, and the charter applied for. The charter listed the name of the corporation as "The Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union of America," and stated the purpose as follows: "...to organize and charter subordinate Unions at various places in Texas and the United States, to

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[17] Ibid., 44, 45.

[18] Hunt interview, August 1, 1956.

assist them in marketing and obtaining better prices for their products, for fraternal purposes, and to co-operate with them in the protection of their interest; to initiate members, and collect a fee therefor." The term of the charter was fifty years and the application was filed with the Secretary of State September 17, 1902. The charter further specified that the corporation "shall have no capital stock paid in, and shall not be divided into shares." Five officers were listed, with Gresham as General Organizer, and the other five of the charter members listed as Directors.[19] Thus the Union began as a private corporation, having a private charter with altruistic purposes.

Smyrna, a little farming community a few miles west of Emory, was chosen as the site of the first local. On September 2, 1902, the first meeting was held at night in a barn, with great secrecy being observed. The organizers and new members sat on bales of hay and performed the ritual by the light of coal-oil lanterns. Gresham took his children, Lutie and Ferris, in the buggy with him to the place of meeting and they stayed in the house nearby with the family of the owner. It was a highly exciting evening for the children, who were called from time to time to bring tablets, pencils

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[19]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 49, 50.

or extra lamps from the house.[20]

The next night the second local was organized at Emory and others nearby followed as news of the movement spread. Progress was rather discouraging for the first five months, but after that organizers began fanning out over the farm areas of Texas and into adjoining states, finding quick response to their invitations to "join up." The initiation fee was one dollar and monthly dues five cents. The first fifteen dollars collected by a local Union in initiation fees went to the organizer for the charter and traveling expenses and he sent $2.50 of this sum to the home office for the charter. An organizer could sub-let his rights to another person for a commission of $2.50 for each local organized. By such a chain system, a territory could be covered with locals in a short time.[21]

Soon after the actual organizing began, the ten original members realized they needed money for promotion, but none had much, if any, ready cash. Rhodes, who was County Clerk of Rains County, secured $1,000.00 and the ten members signed a joint note for it, expecting to repay the note out of charter fees coming in from local Unions and to divide these fees between themselves after the note was paid.[22]

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[20]Mrs. Templeton and Ferris Gresham (in interview June 8, 1957) described this scene in detail. They were twelve and ten years old. The home and barn may have belonged to Sisk or Cochran, who lived in Smyrna community and farmed, or to Turner, who was the Smyrna school-teacher. Subsequent meetings of that local were held in the school house.

[21]Hunt, Farmers' Movement, 53.

[22]Ibid.

Requests for information about the Union and letters enclosing charter fees from organizers in the field came into the little post office in Point in such abundance that new help had to be hired. Gresham employed Alfred Colwick, a "red-headed, red-whiskered Swede of around twenty-five or so," who was a printer and a stenographer, to keep the record books of the Union. Colwick lived in the Gresham home at Point and continued to live with them when the Greshams moved to Emory early in 1903. There Gresham established a small weekly which he named The Farmers' Union Password. In November, 1903, the Union office in Emory burned and all records of membership and of fees received and money disbursed were destroyed. Early in 1904 Gresham moved his family back to Greenville and began to publish the Password there. Every day from many states big bags of letters arrived begging Union headquarters to send organizers. Gresham had an office staff of several stenographers to answer this mail.[23]

The first difficulty encountered by the new organization was lack of control over the men who signed up recruits. These organizers were selected on the basis of their sympathy with the purposes of the Farmers' Union and on their past experience in such work. Many former Alliance evangelists were eager to use their oratorical powers again and glad to earn the

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[23]Letters from and interview with Mrs. Templeton.

commissions paid for the work. The same type of emotional, revival-like appeal that had brought success in the Alliance and Populist membership drives worked for the Farmers' Union. The following excerpt from an appeal signed by the ten charter members will illustrate the tone of their invitation to membership:

> To our fellow-citizens of Rains County first, because it is our home; Texas second, because hers is the brightest star in the American firmament; the United States third, because it is the land of the free and the home of the brave. It is to you that this little book is dedicated, and to you this brief address is directed. We offer no apology for having called your attention to the institution known as the Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union of America. We, whose names are hereto affixed would respectfully call attention to the fact that twenty years have blown into eternity since the Farmers' Alliance had it beginning, and nearly ten years have elapsed since its demise. Today we stand amazed as we watch the organized world do business. It is next to idle to say that every line of business from the bootblacks to the money kings, of the new and old world, are organized, save the men who raise the raw materials for our food and raiment. Time was when the great mass of the people owned the great mass of the wealth of the nation. But today less than ten per cent of our population own ninety per cent of the nation's wealth. We need not have told you this--You were aware of it already. If you ask us what we are going to do about it, we answer you by the echo, 'WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?'
>
> We have launched this new order upon the great sea of anticipation at our own expense and we ask that you help us make it a success, and we believe you will. Look for the organizer. We intend to see that he is a man of integrity and ability. All favors shown him will be appreciated by us, and will be of service to the cause of humanity in promoting this union of wealth producers

> for the attainment of a fuller measure of prosperity and happiness and for the ultimate overthrow of the gigantic trusts and oombines which seek to own and control the lands and laboring and toiling millions of free America.
>
> May the Supreme Ruler of the Universe help us to lift the burdens from our people, by causing them to unite in one solid phalanx for the betterment of our condition and that of our posterity.[24]

Hunt has analyzed the reasons for the quick response to the Union's appeal for members as follows: the attraction of a secret order and the small fee for joining its fraternity; the meager income received by small farmers for the few bales of cotton they produced, even at a ten cent per pound price; the promise of the Union to fight the vicious practices of the mortgage and credit system; the promise of assistance to members in co-operative buying and selling; encouragement of farmers' organizations by the Farmers' Institutes meeting at Texas Agricultural & Mechanical College in 1902 and 1903; and the effectiveness of the emotional appeal.[25]

Along with its charter, each new local received a copy of the Union's constitution, into which Gresham had poured so many months of faith and effort. His character--and that of the friend who helped him phrase it--shines through the preamble setting forth the purposes and aims. From the first

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[24]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 56, 57.

[25]Ibid., 56-60.

three purposes comes the Union's slogan: "Justice, equity, and the Golden Rule." There follows a list of seven aims which, if accomplished, would place farming on an efficiency level with industry and commerce, and the preamble ends with an appeal to the best nature of Union members:

> To strive for harmony and good will among all mankind and brotherly love among ourselves.
>
> To garner the tears of the distressed, the blood of martyrs, the laugh of innocent childhood, the sweat of honest labor, and the virtue of a happy home as the brightest jewels known.[26]

The constitution and by-laws of the Union provided that "no person shall be admitted to membership unless of sound mind, over the age of sixteen years, a white person, of industrious habits, believes in a Supreme being, is a good moral character, and who is a farmer or farm laborer." Country school teachers, country mechanics, country physicians, and country ministers of the Gospel were also eligible. Newspaper editors were eligible provided they received a unanimous vote of the local to which they applied for membership, and provided they signed the following obligation:

> I, ..., do solemnly promise upon my honor that I will support the principles of the Order and through the columns of my paper, the ...., and will do all in my power to promote the upbuilding of the cause of agriculture and further the interests of the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union; and should the time ever

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[26]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 106.

> come when I cannot consistently do so, I will remain quiet concerning the workings of the same.[27]

Men of the professions quickly took advantage of Union membership, to the extent that they began to dominate its policies and the rank-and-file members of the Texas Union later excluded them from membership.[28]

In the first eighteen months of the Union's existence events moved so rapidly and the membership grew so phenomenally that no one person seems to have been able to make order out of chaos. During this period, although Pyle was busy as usual publishing his Courier and managing his farm, he took care of the Union's printing requirements and traveled almost constantly in Texas and in other states, making speeches for the Union.[29] He was once more working hard for his cause and shepherding the new organization that promised great things for the farmer if it could get safely past its first uncertain steps. Pyle "gave practically all of his time to the work of the organization from the time he became a member."[30] The service

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[27]Ibid., 108.

[28]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 62.

[29]These Union activities naturally curtailed Pyle's participation in politics, which up to this time had taken him away from his family quite often. He was in Quitman at a political meeting, however, when his fourth son, Harold Gibson, was born on April 19, 1902, a few days earlier than expected.

[30]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 404.

he performed was one for which all his previous experience had prepared him, for he did not organize in the sense of getting individual locals started, but was the "master-mind of the Union," a speaker who drew big crowds and lit fires of enthusiasm for Union membership wherever he appeared.[31] Gresham handled the details of organization at headquarters and visited nearby communities, with an occasional trip farther afield.[32]

The Union required a guiding hand in many areas, especially where organizers did not hold strict supervision over their sub-organizers, or where organizers ignored the by-laws of the Union. As an example of the latter, Bob King tells of an experience he had in Indian Territory in 1903. Having joined forces with Sam Hampton, an experienced orator of the Populist-Socialist school, King found that organizing progressed rapidly on an arrangement whereby he advertised and got the crowds together and Hampton expounded Union principles, using information King had brought from headquarters and adding his own embellishments. This plan worked well for the benefit of the Union until King discovered that Hampton was trying to persuade the new locals to form an Oklahoma Union completely independent of the Texas Union and pocket the

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[31]R. D. King, interview, June 8, 1957.

[32]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 394.

charter and initiation fees instead of forwarding the money to headquarters. King wrote to Pyle about the situation and Pyle "dropped in on a meeting" in Durant, Hampton's home town, and "called their hand" in a quiet but effective speech. As a cover for his own intentions, Hampton had claimed that Pyle and Gresham were "raking in the graft," a complete falsehood.[33]

Neither Gresham nor Pyle used his position in the Union for personal advancement or profit-making beyond legitimate business usage. Gresham realized enough from the division of income among the ten charter members (in the early period when the Union was their private corporation) to build a modest house for his family. In his enthusiasm for getting the Union organized, he did not keep accurate records of money coming in and money paid out to organizers for their fees and travel expenses. A committee appointed to audit his books in August, 1905, found it impossible to do so, but moved the books be accepted on the basis of his obvious honesty and sincerity.[34] When he died the following year, he left his family without money.[35]

Pyle, on the contrary, made money from his exclusive

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[33]King interview.

[34]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 63, 75.

[35]Ibid., 63.

contract to print Union material. The margin of profit was small but the volume of printing was quite large, and increased with each local added to the organization. An advertisement for this work listed items as follows:

> Constitutions 2 cents each and rituals 2 cents each
> 250 Note Heads $1.00
> 150 Envelopes 1.00
> Receipt Book for dues .25
> Secretary's Minute Book .50
> 100 Union Labels, tags with wire .75
> 100 Union Labels, gum for sticking on packages .50
>
> All other job printing, such as minutes of meetings, etc., at very reasonable prices. The Mineola Courier is an old-time Farmers' Alliance paper. It has never given up the fight. Address all letters to The Mineola Courier, Mineola, Texas.
>
> Always send cash with order.[36]

According to Gresham's daughter, who was closely associated with her father in the Union office during the early years, "Mr. Pyle always had a free hand in guiding the policies of the Union and was always honest and outstanding in his duties. And I believe it was right that he be paid for the printing he did. I once heard some man ask my father why he didn't print the Union literature in his own office and I well remember his answer: 'Because I do not have the equipment to do the printing and Pyle has so he is going to get the work.' My father loved Mr. Pyle and it was natural he would give him the work, and in return I know Mr. Pyle was the one help and inspiration Newt

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[36]National Co-Operator, October 10, 1906.

Gresham needed to keep the movement going its way."[37]

Such a friendship of mutual trust and devotion to a cause was either not understood by the Union's charter members in those days or else did not remain in their memories.[38] These and other old members believed "that Pyle controlled both Gresham and the Union during the first years of the Union."[39] What they remembered as "control" was actually the harmonious co-operation and division of duties between the two men who saw more clearly than did anyone else what the Farmers' Union could accomplish if personal interests and politics were kept out of its policies and activities.

Editor Pyle never envisioned the Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union as a private corporation owned and controlled by its charter members, although that seemed the best method by which to get the infant organization established. It was his view that the Union should as soon as possible widen its scope to match the need it was to fill. His con-

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[37]Letter of Mrs. Lutie Gresham Templeton to the writer, March 1, 1957.

[38]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 63, 64. In conversation with the writer on August 1, 1956, Dr. Hunt stated that he would like to delete certain words and phrases from his text, feeling that he had been unavoidably influenced by those from whom he drew his information, and that they had been envious of Pyle's advantage in profiting on his printing contract. Dr. Hunt expressed pleasure that, in the projected writing of this paper, Pyle's service to the Union would be more fully explored, and he gave the writer permission to use freely any material in his book.

[39]Ibid., 53.

ception of Union organization was that it should be nation-wide and based on a broad foundation of local lodges, each self-governing within the constitution and by-laws. The locals would elect delegates to represent them at the state convention and the state conventions would elect delegates to represent them at the national convention, where the national officers would be elected. Such a democratic procedure would give fair representation at all levels, insure permanence, greatly enhance the organization's influence with all farmers and with all levels of government, and promote coherence in educational and economic undertakings.[40]

Pyle did not reveal the breadth of his vision to any member except Gresham, who was completely in accord with his views. Their first step was to promote state organization, a move most desperately needed to correct the chaos resulting from personal control by a small group already divided into two factions. There was a widespread demand among Texas members for a state meeting, to which all charter members except Gresham turned a deaf ear, believing that since they had secured the charter to do business in Texas the organization belonged to them. Pyle "went before the Board of Ten at their meeting in Emory in September, 1903, and asked them to call a meeting to organize a State Union."[41] His powers of persua-

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[40] National Co-Operator, November 7, 1906, editorial.

[41] Barrett, Mission, History, and Times, 404, and Hunt, Farmer Movements, 63.

sion won their agreement. The constitution stated that when the membership within a state reached 25,000, those members would be given a state charter and be permitted to organize a State Union, such Union to govern itself separately thenceforth. As it was estimated this figure would be reached in Texas early in 1904, a meeting was called for February 16, 1904, at Mineola.

The farmers who had joined the Union in such numbers had not questioned the "private ownership" angle until rumors began to circulate that the charter members were making good profits out of it. With this in mind, on February 9, 1904, Gresham stated in the Password:

> The ten Rains County men who started the Farmers' Union do not claim perfection. They have made mistakes but said mistakes were not fatal. They have been cursed from within and without. They have been charged with everything but a pure motive. They have pursued the even tenor of their way, and have today an organization the like of which has never before been seen for strength and beauty--age considered. Curse us if you will, but we are with you on February 16 to bid you good morning, and to turn over to you the truth which was never given us, but which we assumed at the beginning.[42]

One hundred and five delegates were seated at that first State Convention in Mineola, about forty of whom were organizers who had their first opportunity to compare notes and review the work they had been doing. J. B. Morris, presi-

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[42]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 65.

dent of the Original Ten, called the meeting to order and, after the usual welcome address and response, O. P. Pyle was elected chairman of the temporary organization. A constitution and set of by-laws were adopted and officers elected for the ensuing year, Pyle being named chairman of the state executive committee.[43] This was the type of "behind the scenes" position he always preferred to that of president.[44] Some other states were represented in this Texas meeting, but, of course, had no vote. Because of the wording of the charter--"to organize and charter subordinate Unions at various places in Texas and the United States"--the Texas Union was paramount to those of other states and the officers elected at this convention were considered to be officers of both the Texas and the national unions. This was a peculiar situation, for there was no national organization per se.

The Mineola Courier claimed at this time that the Texas membership had reached 50,000,[45] but the figure could not have been exact because of the fire three months earlier that destroyed the records. Six months later at the second convention,

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[43]Dallas Morning News, February 17, 1904, 10.

[44]This information is from discussions the writer had with her mother concerning her father's activities in the Union and in politics. He always felt he could accomplish more for the good of the organization if he remained "in the wings" rather than "on stage."

[45]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 65.

N. C. Murray, president of the Union, claimed the Texas membership had reached 100,000 in seven hundred locals.[46] Organizing in other states was proceeding rapidly. The years 1903, 1904, and 1905 saw the fastest growth of Union membership in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Indian Territories, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee.[47] Organizers needed special speakers to arouse and hold interest in Union principles and plans. Pyle filled this need, making speeches for the cause in many states.[48] He made several speaking tours that lasted from two to three weeks and took him as far as the Atlantic.[49]

Out-of-state work did not cause him to overlook the opportunity to help farmer groups nearer home whenever possible. He appealed to them to work through the Union cooperatively for the disposal of their produce at prices they themselves set. The following letter from Milton Everett, editor of Texas Producers' Review, reveals Pyle's manner of speaking at this period and the force of his persuasive power:

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[46]Ibid., 66.

[47]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, chapter on the history of the State Unions.

[48]Ibid., 404.

[49]This information is from the writer's mother and from C. E. Revelle.

Austin, Texas, April 12, 1916

Mr. O. P. Pyle, Editor The Journal
Belton, Texas

Friend Pyle:

A short while ago I noticed in The Journal an editorial commending me as a candidate for the legislature in which you said, "The first time I ever saw Everett was at a meeting of truck and fruit growers at Tyler twelve years ago, when he was a delegate from Dallas county."

It has been in my mind since to tell you that was the first time I ever saw Pyle. The fact of mere meeting, however, was not the motive that caused me to think of writing you. It was because of a speech you made for the Farmers Union, and that is really a dull statement, for many others had made speeches in the interest of this organization; but the real news that impressed me, a newspaper writer who had attended a hundred or more farmers meetings of one kind or another, was that it was the first time I had ever heard the suggestion made that in organization matters concerning the disposal of the farmer's produce, the farmer himself should have some say in the matter. That big hall at Tyler was filled with people of all kinds of trade and business, the expectation, of course, being that when permanent organization was made the "town farmer," the commission men, and others would be at the head and manage things generally for the producers of truck and fruit.

I can see your big, gawky form now as it emerged from the audience and came on the stage to address the assemblage on permanent organization. You were a new one to me, new one more as a specimen than as a mere individual, and I wondered what the big fellow in the cheap pants with coat off exposing huge "gallasses," had to say. It looked as if a good news item was to be pulled off, and that is the reason I remember the occasion so distinctly. As I recall it now after twelve years, the permanent organization had about been resolved on when you appeared on the platform with a mighty logic dressed in mighty few clothes. That speech

> ought to have been taken down in shorthand as a curiosity, from the fact that it was the first time a horny handed tiller of the soil who looked the part had ever risen in a mixed assemblage to say that the producer of the toilsome farm crop should have something to say about its disposal and the price for the toil.
>
> I was on that stage at the time and nearby, and I remember the curiosity, the public boredom of some, that the already greased ways to the launching of the Fruit and Truck Growers Association should be sanded by the hand of a sandy land farmer.
>
> But the logic was there, truth is mighty and will prevail, provided some one give it utterance at the right time, and the result was that the Association became the creature of the Farmers Union and not that of the middlemen...[50]

The "shirt sleeves and galluses" description of Pyle, confirmed by a picture of him with the delegates to a Texas Union convention, leads one to suspect that the "horny handed" editor had a well-developed theatrical sense. He dressed the part and was perfectly at home when among "the boys from the forks of the crick," yet he was equally at ease and quite well-dressed in other surroundings.

By early 1904 the income from Pyle's various businesses, especially the Union printing contract, justified the building of a new home, for which he gave his wife carte blanche. They were living in the Jim Hogg home in Mineola at the time the

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[50] Belton Journal, April 20, 1916, letter of Milton Everett to O. P. Pyle.

house was under construction a hundred feet away. Using plans she found in a magazine, Mrs. Pyle employed local workmen to build the house, which contained a spacious library, parlor, dining room, butler's pantry, kitchen, two porches and two halls downstairs, and six bedrooms, a long hall and one bath upstairs. A cupola graced a front corner above the wide veranda. Mrs. Pyle re-designed the stairway to suit her own ideas and had to bring a carpenter from Dallas to build it. While the house was being built, Pyle paid for the labor and materials out of his pocket at the end of each working day.[51] Furniture, draperies, and decorations for the entire house were ordered from Dallas and the home became a showplace of Mineola.[52] Shortly after the family moved into it, Marcella Angeline was born on July 6, 1904.

At this time and for the next two years Pyle's printing business employed twenty people and had a larger payroll than any other business in the town. One of the printers, Douglas Jackson, could run the plant and "put out" the Courier when Pyle was away on Union speaking tours.[53] The quarters occupied

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[51]Ellie Reaves, interview, August 27, 1956.

[52]Ibid., The house is in excellent condition today. It is owned by Mrs. Bertha Thorp, who lives downstairs and rents the upstairs bedrooms to gentlemen. By coincidence, Mrs. Thorp's sister-in-law owns the Zachary Gibson home in Alba, the writer's birthplace.

[53]Belton Journal, February 24, 1916; also C. E. Revelle interview, August 27, 1956.

Mineola home built by O. P. Pyle in 1904.

by the Courier since 1894 having become totally inadequate, Pyle built a one-story brick building one block off the main street and one block from his new home. He drove himself with his characteristic energy and the light over his office desk usually burned until well after midnight.[54]

As the number of locals increased, there was greater need for a newspaper to which all locals could report and from which all members could obtain the same information on Union affairs. To fill this need Pyle established the National Co-Operator in December, 1904, publishing it weekly but not on the same day as the Courier, which continued to serve its patrons. The Co-Operator's page size was half that of present city newspapers, each page carried four columns of print, and there were usually twelve pages. It contained no local news because it was designed to interest readers in many states, and the national news was selected for its interest to farmers and effect on their welfare. The front page usually carried a picture of a person or group prominent in Union activities, and one or more stories on the most important Union news of the past week or plans for the immediate future. Much of the inside space was

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[54]C. E. Revelle, interview, August 27, 1956. Mr. Revelle stated that he often remonstrated with his friend for "burning the candle at both ends", but Pyle answered that there was so much to be done and not enough time to do it.

taken up with reports from locals, reports of speeches, some boiler-plate material on scientific agriculture and animal husbandry, letters from Union members, and advertising, which was mostly for patent medicines and farm implements. There were no beer or liquor ads.

The editorial pages were devoted to the editor's analyses of Union problems, farm problems, and legislation affecting the farmer. Between the masthead and first editorial in every issue appeared a cut of an attractive, two-story home with the following statement beneath it:

> The Home is the hope of the Nation. When every family owns a home free from mortgages, then indeed will we have a prosperous country. To own a home is a duty every man owes himself, his family, and his country.[55]

The subscription price for the Co-Operator was one dollar per year, which brought it within reach of all Union members. Pyle judged well the need for such a paper, for the mailing list grew rapidly and soon the Mineola post office was forced to hire additional help on Co-Operator publishing days. In less than two years the little post office was swamped by the weekly inundation of Co-Operators and the post mistress was greatly relieved to learn that it was to be moved to Dallas.[56] The total circulation was

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[55]National Co-Operator, random copies, 1904 through 1908.

[56]Miss Lucy Breen, interview, August 28, 1956. Miss Breen was the post mistress.

nearing the 100,000 mark.[57]

After getting the Co-Operator into print in December, 1904, Pyle returned to his avocation of speaking at Union meetings near and far. On February 15, 1905, the third convention met in Forth Worth with about three hundred delegates present. At this meeting the Union paid the Original Ten incorporators $1,000.00 for their rights to the state and national organization, which up to this time were identical, and the number of members required for state organization was reduced from 25,000 to 5,000. It was claimed that national membership at the time was 200,000, with 4,264 locals of which Texas had 2,926.[58] The constitution was amended to forbid political discussion in a Union meeting, but, paradoxically, the members agreed to keep a lobby in Austin to work for legislation favorable to agrarian interests.

Hunt's book relates that this convention began in great confusion and "was slow in getting under way due to the sickness of President Murray; O. P. Pyle, chairman of the executive

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[57]National Co-Operator, October 31, 1906.

[58]Dallas Morning News, February 16, 1905, 7. In the January 10 issue J. D. Montgomery, state organizer, is quoted as stating that the Union with its 100,000 members could control the politics of the state if it desired. According to Mrs. Templeton, there was much talk in high Union circles of running Pyle and Gresham for governor and lieutenant-governor. The writer remembers this statement from her mother, also. Pyle, however, would not take the Union into politics, believing that each member should at all times be a free and independent voter.

committee, C. M. Crompton, state lecturer, vice-president J. B. Morris and Newt Gresham were on hand, but found themselves confronted with such an unruly crowd of delegates that they could not handle them."[59] The fact is that Pyle was at home recovering from a severe case of pneumonia such as that which almost took his life sixteen years earlier. Baby Marcella was ill of pneumonia, too, and on February 16 she passed away. The editor knew nothing of what was taking place in the Fort Worth convention until several days later.[60] If he had been there, he could and would have brought order out of chaos, for he was more experienced in handling large crowds than anyone else in the Union and most of the delegates were accustomed to hearing him speak. In his absence, they elected him to the executive committee.[61]

The strife that marked the beginning of that convention seemed to be settled before the delegates left Fort Worth

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[59]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 67. Details of "behind the scenes" activities at this convention were related to Dr. Hunt by E. A. Calvin nearly thirty years later. Mr. Calvin's memory played him false in this instance.

[60]LaVera Pyle Dyess and Jewel Gibson Cypher (Mrs. John A. Cypher of Kingsville) supplied this information. This tragic period is etched deeply in their memories. Mrs. Gibson and her youngest daughter, Jewel, were in the Pyle home to help care for baby Marcella and "Mr. Pyle."

[61]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 71.

but it broke out again very soon. It was born of that perennial trouble of farmer organizations: the "dirt farmers'" distrust of the professional men who were working to improve conditions for their detractors. Perhaps it seemed to these "doubting Thomases" against human nature that a man should devote his time and talents in the interest of others. If a man derived any profit through the organization--no matter how legitimately, as did O. P. Pyle through the printing of Union material--he was suspect. The farmers were easily misled. They were told only one side of the story, and, of course, never knew that men like Pyle spent far too freely of their personal resources in furthering the Union cause.[62]

President Murray, who had been re-elected in Fort Worth, was at first the center of the storm. The locals of Hunt County, his home, demanded his resignation on the belief that he "was dominated by Pyle, Gresham, Shaw [W. A., editor of the Texas Farmer], etc., who were newspaper men and not farmers." One prominent member expressed it this way [to Hunt]: "Pyle and Gresham 'farmed' out Murray, and ran the Union for themselves."[63] Murray called a meeting in Waco on August 10, 1905, at which the delegates were predominantly

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[62]Whenever this subject was broached, the writer's mother said she would like to have seen an accounting between Union funds spent in her husband's behalf and his personal funds expended on the cause.

[63]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 71.

"wool hat boys" who were unfamiliar with parliamentary order. Their continuous cry was for a Farmers' Union for and by farmers only,[64] and they promptly passed a resolution amending the constitution so that only bona fide farmers--those actually engaged in farming--could hold Union offices. While the delegates were trying to determine how to make this distinction, faced with the fact that most of the men at whom they aimed their resolution had been farmers almost all their lives and presently owned farmland, someone with a wry sense of humor submitted the following resolution:

> Resolved, that the portion of the constitution that refers to actual farmers be amended so as to read as follows:
>
> He is a man who holds the plow handles from early morning till dewy eve; he must make his living only by the sweat of his brow; while he holds the plow. If he sharpens the plow himself, then he is a blacksmith; if he builds a corn-crib, he is a carpenter; and in either case he is not eligible to membership in the Union. He must swear that he has no ambition to ever get able to quit plowing, and he must teach his children to follow his footsteps, and have no greater ambition than his own, provided he always shall be allowed to attend the various organizations to which he belongs, discuss politics, and perform other like services, while his wife and children represent him at the plow handles.[65]

One reason the delegates were in rebellious mood was that they were not reimbursed for their expenses in attending the

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[64] Ibid., 72.

[65] Texas Farmer, August 19, 1905, 4.

convention.[66] Although the February report had shown $6,000.00 on hand, there was no money in the treasury. Their wrath was directed at Gresham, who was secretary-treasurer, but, as has been related, the auditing committee absolved him of any guilt except poor bookkeeping.[67] A small group convinced the delegates that newspaper men and politicians, both Democrat and Populist or ex-Populist, were trying to draw the Union into the political arena where the Alliance had met its death-blow.[68] Still another reason for discord was that delegates from other newly-organized State Unions were growing restive under the compulsion to send all charter and initiation fees to the Texas Union. The "dirt farmer" element in the Texas Union resisted this protest. They did not see the possibilities for the cause inherent in nation-wide co-operation. They saw only that they would lose control and lose money.[69] In passing the resolution to exclude non-"dirt

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[66]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 77.

[67]Ibid., 75.

[68]Ibid., 74.

[69]Ibid., 71; "There was a small clique, responsible for making public scandal of differences (as to policy) for no reason under heaven than to create a party or following. This clique was almost unanimously condemned. It was best for the Union to elect inexperienced men to office in order to settle this family row. Leaders in the Union voluntarily retired for this purpose." Texas Farmer, August 19, 1905.

farmers" from office, they took away the official positions of both the Union's founder and its most widely known protagonist.

Pyle was now, of course, no longer on the executive committee. It was said of the newly-elected group:

> The new executive committee is composed of men who can tell all about the time to plant corn, how to plow cotton, when to cut wheat, etc., but unfortunately they are not very well up on codes of handling an affair of this size. They say they will learn, and the old executive committee has already been appealed to for advice.[70]

Again all the officers were Texans.[71]

The outcome of this fourth convention strengthened Pyle's conviction that the Union must be organized on a national basis. He was in close touch with members in other states and saw the possibilities of his early dream coming true--a vigorous Farmers' Union organization in every agricultural state. No doubt his audiences had caught the contagion of his enthusiasm.

Under the new requirement of 5,000 members for state organization, as set by the February, 1905, convention, several states were soon ready for this step. Shortly after the convention, the 839 locals of Oklahoma and Indian Territories

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[70] Waco Daily Times Herald, August 11, 1905, 6.

[71] Ibid.; the officers were: president, E. A. Calvin; vice-president, J. A. Wheeler; secretary-treasurer, B. F. Chapman; state lecturer, D. J. Neill; organizer, J. D. Montgomery.

combined in a union called Indiahoma, and asked Pyle to preside at their first meeting, as he had at the organization of the Texas Union. On April 4, the Louisiana State Union was formed and they, too, asked Pyle to preside. On April 27, members in Arkansas met for the same purpose and they honored Pyle as presiding officer. The Georgia State Union was organized at Thomaston on May 4. Newt Gresham and his son, Ferris, accompanied Pyle on this trip,[72] and again Pyle presided until the election of permanent officers.[73] Georgia declared unanimously for the organization of a National Union.[74]

These conventions generated so much sentiment for national organization that on May 23 President Murray sent out a notice from Union Headquarters in Greenville to all state Unions to elect delegates to a meeting to be held on September 7, 1905, in Texarkana, Texas, to consider the "national interests of the Union" and look "to the organization of a National Union if deemed timely and advisable." The basis of representation was to be: 1 delegate at large from each State Union; 1 delegate for every 2,500 members of each State Union; 1 delegate from each state having one or

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[72]Ferris Gresham, interview, June 8, 1957.

[73]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 204, 206, 210, 213, and 404.

[74]Texas Farmer, June 3, 1905. The May 20 issue states that Pyle represented the Union at a Railroad Commission hearing in Austin on May 16.

more local Unions but having no State Union.[75] This notice was published weekly in the National Co-Operator all through the summer. As the position of Pyle and Gresham on the subject of national organization was well known, it was probably this notice that incited the belief among some Texas members that Murray was in their control.

The issue of depriving the Texas Union of its dominance and making the Farmers' Union national in fact became all-absorbing in the weeks following the Waco meeting. Texas members who opposed a new setup mistakenly thought the leaders who had "stepped down" at Waco were supporting national organization as a means of regaining power "beyond the reach of Texas farmers."[76] Whatever the motives of the other leaders may have been, this was not true of O. P. Pyle. Regardless of actions or opinions of his home-state members, he was pursuing the plan he had held in mind since the birth of the Union, and had persuasively advocated for many months. For realization, the plan needed only growth of membership in other states until there should be several state Unions whose amalgamation could create a strong and influential

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[75]National Co-Operator, August 2, 1905; also Texas Farmer, June 17, 1905.

[76]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 77.

national body. This was the first lesson he learned from the Alliance: the effectiveness of national organization on a federated basis. By mid-August six state Unions were ready and several others were nearing the required membership of 5,000. Pyle had long since chosen the man he believed could lead the Union to heights never before reached in the history of the agrarian movement.

This man was Charles Simon Barrett, president of the Georgia State Union.[77] Pyle and Barrett met on one of Pyle's early speaking tours into the deep South and developed a friendship that was warm and enduring. Barrett was born on a farm in Pike County, Georgia, January 28, 1866, and "educated in the country schools of Georgia and the colleges of Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana." He married in 1891 and had five children. Barrett was vitally concerned in farm problems and eager to do something about the farmer's plight. He joined the Alliance at the first opportunity and the Farmers' Union as soon as an organizer, R. F. Duckworth, was sent into Georgia in the fall of 1903. He became an active organizer himself and was elected president when the Georgia Union was organized in May, 1905.[78] Barrett was a "natural-born" politician but

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[77]The writer's mother always spoke of Charles S. Barrett as "Mr. Pyle's friend and protege," explaining that her husband had selected Barrett to head the Union long before the opportunity arrived to present him in that light.

[78]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 289, his biographical sketch.

had never sought political office. He was a farmer and an enlightened one.

Pyle and Barrett had much in common to cement their instant friendship. Whenever Barrett came to Texas on Union business,he visited in the Pyle home, and the two men had opportunity for the type of intimate discussion that reveals kindred ideas and aspirations.[79] Their hopes for the Union were identical. Barrett had experience in farm movements, speaking and writing ability, personal magnetism, and devotion to the Union cause, all of which were essential for one who would head the National Union. At the Georgia State meeting in May Pyle had ample opportunity to observe his parliamentary knowledge and presiding talent, and henceforth he felt confident that Barrett was thoroughly capable of leading the National Union.

The meeting called for September 7 never took place. There was a yellow fever epidemic in Texas and state quarantine regulations would prevent attendance of all members living east of Texarkana.[80] By late fall, however, the clamor for a national meeting could no longer be ignored. Calvin called for delegates from all states having Union locals to

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[79]Mrs. Dyess, the writer's sister, remembers Barrett well and tells anecdotes of his visits in the Mineola home when she was allowed to listen as the two friends sat on at the dining-table in deep discussion far into the evening.

[80]Texas Farmer, August 22, 1905.

meet in Texarkana on December 6, 1905.

The first annual meeting of the National Farmers' Union of America convened in the West Side city hall at 10:00 on Tuesday morning, December 5. Business was transacted behind closed doors and each person entering had to "spell out the pass word" to the doorkeeper or have "the door shut in his face." The delegates were instructed not to talk about Union matters outside the hall. Having observed these men for two days, a reporter described them for his paper in these words:

> One noticeable feature about the convention is the fact that few of the delegates have the appearance of being farmer folk. Most of them are well dressed, with derby hats, frock coats, white shirts and standing collars--only occasionally is a dark shirt or a wool hat to be seen. The body as a whole has more the appearance of a gathering of merchants or professional men than of tillers of the soil. The younger delegates are especially well dressed, and some of them wear their hair parted in the middle. Their complexions have a delicate tint, with never a suggestion of sunburn. Quite a number of famous middle of the road Populist leaders are attending as delegates. Also the delegates, however, seem in dead earnest to accomplish something for the benefit and advancement of the farming interest, and they meet all suggestions that their movement has any politics in it with an indignant protest and flat denial.[81]

At 4:00 o'clock on the first day the credentials committee reported the representation as follows: Arkansas 33,

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[81] Dallas Morning News, December 8, 1905. Unless otherwise indicated, all information on this convention is from the daily news stories in this paper.

Alabama 1, Georgia 17, Indiahoma 31, Kansas 1, Louisiana 7, Tennessee 2, and Texas 61. Missouri, Virginia, and Mississippi also sent delegates.[82] The South Carolina delegation touched off a humorous diversion by arriving a day late and marching in a body from the train to the hall, which they entered with "a genuine rebel yell." "Before they could take seats the president called them forward to the speaker's stand and presented them with a flask of whiskey each, with the remark that it was 'a long time between drinks.'"

The president referred to was E. A. Calvin, who was elected temporary chairman on the first day. Permanent officers were not elected until Friday afternoon. At noon Friday the Texas delegation caucused and resolved to vote as a unit on all further questions coming before the convention and to support Calvin for National president and Gresham for National organizer. When the afternoon session began, however, Calvin withdrew his name, perhaps because he realized the sentiment of the other states was for Pyle to be president. The Texas delegates had been instructed at the Waco convention to vote only for an actual farmer, and the majority took the stand, as at Waco, that Pyle was not a farmer. Consequently,

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[82] Texas Farmer, December 16, 1905. Editor Shaw, mentioned by the News reporter, along with Milton Park of the Southern Mercury and O. P. Pyle of the Mineola Courier, as "prominent Texans in attendance," wrote a long article for his paper the following week.

they did not vote and it was not known how many would have voted for him had not the unit-rule prevailed. As it was, he was elected by states other than Texas. There is little doubt that, well known as he was to so many of the delegates through personal contact and through the pages of the Co-Operator, he would have had many votes of the Texas delegates had each been free to make his choice. His election, according to some delegates interviewed, was due largely to the efforts of F. V. Evans of Fort Worth, lecturer for the Twelfth Texas district, who had been "on the ground hard at work for his man since the opening day of the convention."

An observer at this meeting who had been on the executive committee of the Texas Union with Pyle, reported that the Texas delegation had in its personnel many of the state's strongest, most patriotic, useful, and unselfish farmers. He was especially impressed with the high caliber of the delegations from other states and territories, and noted that discussions, as a rule, were without rancor and conducted according to parliamentary courtesy. Of the election he noted:

> Other states have not drawn the lines so taut against people who are in good standing in the order, but are classed as teachers, preachers, editors, doctors, or mechanics. His [Pyle's] friends in other states, and many in Texas, thought that Mr. Pyle was the logical president of the National Union, because of his high standing and his faithful service in the Union. They say he enlisted in the cause early in its history, and has never since refused a single

> call to duty; that no other man is as widely known in all the states and Territories--not even any of the original ten; that for many years he has been identified with the farmers in every cause for which they have battled; that his moral and social standing is without blemish; that his mental and educational qualifications are commanding; that, in fact speaking of him from the standpoint of a stockman, his pedigree is perfect, answering every point at almost, if not quite 100.
>
> When Mr. Calvin declined to be a candidate, almost all, if not the entire Texas delegation would have cast the vote for Mr. Pyle with the greatest pleasure, but for the fact that a majority considered themselves bound by the unit rule. In the Texas delegation were many of the best friends Mr. Pyle has in this world. President Calvin, in withdrawing stated, in substance, that it would do his heart good to move "Bro." Pyle's election by acclamation but he felt bound by instructions.
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> There were a number in the delegation, however, who did not think the instructions in favor of actual farmers applied to Mr. Pyle. He is directly interested in horticulture, and is reported as the owner of a farm, while his labor for years has been identified with the forces battling in the interest of agriculture. These people do not think that ownership of a newspaper or employment as editor, should debar him from the honored title of actual farmer...Other reasons than those stated made many of Mr. Pyle's friends contend that he meets the condition of actual farmer.[83]

Three week later, having received so many letters and telegrams of congratulations that it was impossible to answer them individually, Pyle wrote a public letter of thanks and published it in his paper. Of his election he made the

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[83] Texas Farmer, December 16, 1905, news story and editorial by Editor W. A. ("Farmer") Shaw. The January 13, 1906, issue gives a resume to date.

following remarks:

> Friends, you have placed this great burden upon me without any solicitation from me whatever. I repeatedly told you that I would accept this great office only on condition that it should come to me in the proper way--without my saying a word or doing anything looking toward my election. My idea of electing officers in the Farmers' Union has always been that there are none of us too big to accept the smallest office in the Union if it should come in the proper way, and there are none of us big enough to accept the smallest office if obtained by scheming and the methods of the politician. I steadfastly refused to go into any caucus whatever, and did nothing looking toward my election. The fact is, I had grave fears that it was not best for me personally, nor for our great organization for me to be made its chief, and so informed many of my friends, who were anxious that I be elected. My friends thought differently.[84]

In a very short while, events were to prove that Pyle was right in his prediction. First, however, there was the problem of getting the new national organization firmly established. Gresham had been elected national organizer and Barrett had been elected to the National Board of Directors and was soon made chairman.[85] These two joined with Pyle

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[84]Ibid., January 20, 1906, reprint of Pyle's letter first published in the Co-Operator. Page 79 of Hunt's book states: "Calvin claims Barrett had been groomed for the presidency, but owing to circumstances, Pyle was elected instead, with a secret understanding that Pyle would later resign and thus pave the way for Barrett's elevation to the presidency." The writer's mother said Pyle appreciated the honor but took the position only until he could insure Barrett's election.

[85]Other officers and directors were from Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Indian Territory.

and three other directors in signing a note for $1,000.00 to help defray the expenses of national organization. When this money was used up, they borrowed $500.00 more, but soon dues were coming in satisfactorily and they did not have to borrow again.[86]

Next, they secured from the Secretary of State at Austin an amendment to the original Union charter making it clear that the officers of the Texas Union were not officers of the National Union, and that the newly-elected officers of the National Union had the right to act in the name of the National Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America. Under pressure from some of the Texas members, Calvin got an injunction in the courts preventing the officers of the National Union from using that name and from taking any action thereunder. The basis of this injunction was that when the Texas Union was organized, the original charter members retained the right to operate outside Texas, and from the time the Texas Union bought the charter from the original ten its officers henceforth had the right to act for both the Texas Union and the National Union. Calvin claimed the original charter was still in effect, making him national as well as state president. He called a meeting to be held in Dallas, March 6, 1906, ostensibly for

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[86]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 191.

other purposes but actually to settle the ambiguity of the national offices.[87]

Milton Park, publisher of the Southern Mercury, began a vicious attack on Pyle and Gresham immediately after the Texarkana meeting, protesting, among other things, the arrangements by which Texas locals were to vote for or against the new national constitution written at Texarkana.[88] Delegates at the Dallas meeting, stirred to revolt by these charges, voted to support Calvin's contention. "Several of the officials elected at Texarkana were on hand and also many delegates from other states [who] were allowed all privileges except that of voting."[89]

A majority of the voting delegates adopted a resolution that Calvin and his staff renounce their claims as national officers, that Pyle and the officers elected at Texarkana agree to abandon the amended charter secured at Austin and resign as national officers, and that a new set of officers be elected by the National Board of Directors to serve until the next annual convention of the National Union should be held. Calvin and the Texas officials would continue on in their state offices.[90] Pyle, who worked

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[87]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 80, and Union Banner, February 17, 1905.

[88]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 80. Park's ulterior purposes behind this attack will be delved into later.

[89]Ibid., 81.

[90]Ibid.

out these concessions, gladly resigned the office he had not sought, and saw to it that the Board of Directors should elect as president of the National Union R. F. Duckworth, who was Gresham's co-founder of the Password, Georgia's first organizer, and a close friend of Pyle, Gresham, and Barrett.[91] Pyle preferred that his choice for national leader should be elected by the state delegates in convention rather than to be elected to an interim office by the Board of Directors. It was agreed between these friends that Duckworth would decline to run for the office at the second national convention (which was to meet in Texarkana in September, 1906) and that Barrett would be the Board's candidate. Barrett was so elected in September and served the National Union for twenty-six years in such manner as to fulfill all that Pyle had predicted of him.

Shortly after the meeting in Dallas, Newt Gresham went to Tennessee to preside at the organization of the state Union. The meeting opened on April 3, 1906, and two days later Gresham was stricken with appendicitis. He died on April 10th.[92] Pyle felt this loss acutely for they had been very close for six years and had withstood together the verbal assaults of men who neither understood their high purposes

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[91]Barrett, Mission, History and Times, 298.

[92]Ibid., 394.

for the Farmers' Union nor appreciated their unselfish devotion to the cause.

Pyle immediately began making plans to help Gresham's family. The first step was to see to the further education of the eldest child, Lutie, who was sixteen years old. He secured a scholarship for her to the college her father had attended and asked through the Co-Operator that all who wished to express their appreciation of Gresham's work in the Union donate to this fund.[93] The following summer he arranged to have her presented at the Texas state convention in Fort Worth, August 7, and adopted as the "Daughter of the Farmers' Union." He presented her at the National convention in Little Rock in September, where she was adopted as the "Daughter of the National Union" and put on the National payroll. The delegates at this convention also adopted as a national emblem a small button with Gresham's picture in the center and the initials "F. E. & C. U." around the edge.[94] Pyle had this button designed and made, and advertised it in each issue of his paper. One purpose of presenting Gresham's daughter at the conventions

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[93]National Co-Operator, September 26, 1906. In a letter to the writer dated February 11, 1957, Mrs. Lutie Templeton stated: "Whatever education I attained was because of your father--he secured for me a scholarship--in other words he paid for it, he just asked me what school I preferred, and I chose Add-Ran College at Thorp Springs."

[94]Southwestern Farmer, October, 1907, 2.

was to call attention to the sale of these buttons, for the profit from their sale (at 25¢ each) went to Mrs. Gresham for her children's education.[95]

On October 9, 1907, a monument to Newt Gresham was unveiled at Point, birthplace of the Union. This, too, was arranged by Pyle in loving memory of his friend.[96]

Through all the internal strife within the Union, Pyle went on with his speaking engagements, scheduling his tours to allow little more time between appearances than was needed to travel from one town to the next. For example, in June, 1906, he published in the Co-Operator the following itinerary: Holland in Bell County, July 3; Lee's Summit, 5th; Kokono, 7th; Grapeland, 12th; Corinth, Leon County, 13th; Williamson County, 17th to 20th; Rockdale, 21st; and Seymour, 25th; and in announcing these dates added that he could "accept a few more calls to speak."[97] The report of the Holland meeting on July 3 and 4 stated in part:

> ...address to the public by Bro. O. P. Pyle, of Mineola. Will say in regard to Bro. Pyle that he made a lasting impression upon the minds of all present. It is needless for us to say anything in

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[95]Pyle sent a cut of a picture of Miss Lutie Gresham to other farm papers and magazines to run with the notice of her "adoption." The Southwestern Farmer used this picture as the cover of its October, 1907, issue. Young R. H. Templeton, a University of Tennessee graduate who had recently entered the University of Texas law school, saw this picture, cut it out, wrote to her, and they were married February 13, 1908. Letter of Mrs. Templeton to the writer, January 15, 1958.

[96]National Co-Operator, October 9, 1907.

[97]Ibid., June 27, 1906.

> praise of Bro. Pyle. We all know him. He is known throughout the breadth of our Southland. Not only that, but he has spread Unionism from Maine to California and from the Lakes to the Gulf.[98]

This was not an exaggeration. Of course, Pyle did not speak personally in sections where the Union was not yet organizing, but he continued to be invited to speak in all the Southern states, and the National Co-Operator did, indeed, carry his voice to the far ends of the country.[99] By the fall of 1906, this weekly had attained a circulation larger than that of any other newspaper in Texas, including the city dailies. In September Pyle combined his paper with the Texas Farm Journal, a semi-monthly paper established in 1880 and published in Dallas. George B. Latham, the manager, became business manager of the Co-Operator. In view of the intolerable strain the Co-Operator's mailing was placing on the small Mineola post office, and the advantages to be gained in publishing in a city, Pyle decided to move the

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[98] Ibid., July 11, 1906.

[99] Ibid., various issues. Almost every issue of the Co-Operator has requests for Pyle to speak in Texas and most of the Southern states, reports of these speeches, and letters praising the paper. There were, of course, far more requests for speakers than one man could fill. Pyle set up a speakers' bureau of men who were in the pay of the Union and were free to go whenever called. A local desiring a speaker applied to the Co-Operator and one of the men on the roster was engaged.

National Co-Operator and Farm Journal to Dallas. A half-page ad in the first edition published after the move stated:

> There have been few records of newspaper growth and development to compare with that of the Co-Operator in the past few years. It had its beginning in the country printing office and soon outgrew the home of its birth and a modern building was erected and equipped with a plant that looked adequate to take care of the increase for years, but in months the National Co-Operator made such rapid strides in its already large circulation that it was necessary to look for larger and more complete equipment to turn out the paper to the best advantage for its increasing patronage.
>
> In moving to Dallas we got the equipment required to do this work and this issue of the Co-Operator is printed on the largest automatic self-feed Miehle press in the Southwest.[100]

Pyle continued to publish the Mineola Courier after he moved to Dallas, leaving the paper in the capable hands of Doug Jackson.[101] He did not sell the house, either, but found a renter for it. It was not easy to leave the home they had built with loving care, and it was not easy to leave friends and neighbors of twelve years standing,[102] but O. P.

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[100]National Co-Operator, October 10, 1906. The paper's publishing day was Wednesday.

[101]Letter of Mrs. Arthur Soulé of Kilgore, Texas, to the writer, March 2, 1957. Soulé went to work on the Courier in 1895 when he was fourteen years old and stayed with it until he moved away from Mineola in 1907. When Pyle bought the Belton Journal in 1911, Soulé went there to work for him and remained for several years.

[102]National Co-Operator, October 10, 1906, editorial.

and Susie and their children moved, with all their furnishings, into a rented house on Worth Street in Dallas. Susie soon found a house to her liking. It was on Bryan Avenue at the corner of Fitzhugh Street in the best residential section of the city, and it was large enough to accomodate the furniture from the big Mineola house. Bryan High School was near and there was a private kindergarten across the street, so the children were happy with their new home and began at once to make friends. A white housekeeper lived in the home, and one of Susie's younger sisters lived with the family and went to school with the older children.[103]

The Pyle family had hardly become settled on Worth Street when the head of the house was off again on a trip that was to bring him the greatest pleasure and satisfaction of all the years of his crusade. On October 22, 1906, the National Co-Operative Farmers' Congress opened a three-day meeting in Representative Hall in Topeka, Kansas. The purpose of this meeting was "the bringing together of all farmer organizations into one--into the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America, and for the purpose of giving impetus to the movement in the North and West."[104] Newspaper reports of the sessions named C. S. Barrett of

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[103]This information is from Mrs. Dyess' memory. Mildred Marjorie was born in this house on September 24, 1907.

[104]National Co-Operator, October 31, 1906.

Georgia, H. H. McCullough of Arkansas, and James Butler of Kansas as principally responsible for the meeting,[105] but it was obviously the fruition of a plan carefully laid out by Pyle and Barrett probably before Barrett's election to the National presidency.

The Congress was the next and logical step forward in Pyle's dream of farmers as businessmen planning together the conduct of their operations on a nation-wide, co-operative basis, setting prices for products and arranging for favorable marketing. The object of the meeting as given out to the local papers was:

> ...to decide some plan whereby all the co-operative associations in the country can work together to keep up the price of farm products. The delegates make no secret of the object of the meeting ...every other business combines to fix prices and...the farmer has as much right to do so as others.
>
> The plan which will be discussed mostly is that which has been adopted in the South where the Farmers' Union [members] have...banded together, and co-operative gins and co-operative warehouses are used to hold back cotton until the price is paid, which the farmers think is profitable.
>
> In short the meeting here wants to form an organization to fix the minimum price for which the farmer will sell his products. They want the different organizations to work together but before the meeting is closed it may result in another Grange or Farmers' Alliance.[106]

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[105] Topeka Daily Capital, Topeka, Kansas, October 23, 1906.

[106] Ibid., This reporter seems to have recognized the ultimate purpose in the plans of the Farmers' Union leaders in

In addition to delegates from the various states where the Farmers' Union was organized, there were representatives from the Iowa Farmers' Grain Dealers' Association, Farmers' Independent Grain Dealers' Association of Kansas, and various other co-operative societies and associations, including dairymen. Barrett was elected chairman. In reply to the welcoming speech of the Topeka mayor, Pyle remarked that he felt at home in Kansas as his parents had lived there. After complimenting the people of Kansas, he took advantage of the opportunity to praise the Farmers' Union, saying it was the most wonderful organization ever known because of what it had done for the farmer and what it hoped to do.

> He said the Grange had...introduced improved farm machinery and made two blades of grass grow where one grew before. "Now we want the money for that extra blade of grass."
>
> He told how the farmers in Texas had demanded 11 cents for cotton and got it and said that they were paying enough for flour in Texas so that the Kansas farmer should receive a dollar for his wheat, "and you can get it if you stand together and demand it. We want this organization to be national in fact. We do not want you to join us but we want you and your organization in our councils. We will swap clothes for biscuit.

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bringing the attention of Midwestern farmers to the benefits possible through Union membership. In the light of present-day discussion of Federal control, subsidies, ceiling prices, and minimum prices in farm production, it is interesting to note that this Congress was the first effort made by farmers to secure this protection for themselves.

Delegates to National Farmers's Co-operative Congress
Representative Hall, Topeka, Kansas
October, 1906
Front row: O. P. Pyle, third from left; Charles S. Barrett, fourth from right.

> What do you say? We can do it and we can set a minimum price on all our products. As the matter stands now we are paying two prices for flour and you are paying too much for cotton products. We want a little more co-operation.
>
> He then spoke of the great benefit the Farmers' Alliance had done in destroying sectionalism and bringing the farmers of the South and the West together.[107]

As a member of the Resolutions Committee for this Congress, Pyle was in his preferred position from which he could help shape the present aims and future course of this body of farm organization business agents. The Committee's resolutions, adopted by unanimous vote of the Congress, cited that the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America was the most practical farmer organization through which to achieve their purposes; that it was the greatest business association in point of numbers and the most powerful body of organized farmers in the world; and that all farmers' organizations operating for similar purposes should consolidate with the Farmers' Union at the earliest possible date in order to present a solid front in one powerful organization.

Other resolutions were adopted which recommended the organization of a ladies' auxiliary; commended the LaFollette commission investigating the grain trust; recommended govern-

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[107] Ibid., quoting Pyle's speech.

ment supervision of grain inspection; indorsed the principle that producers of grain or other farm products have equal rights to name and establish the price of their products that the manufacturer of finished products has to put the price on his output; and recommended a system of direct exchange between the producer of agricultural products and the manufacturer who turns those products into finished articles ready for the consumer.

Reports of the other committees covering various phases of co-operative effort such as canning, stock raising, creameries, manufacturing, rural telephones, insurance, grain marketing, and cotton marketing revealed the business-like attitude of these farmer delegates. They were not protesting against fate, the politicians, and the government; they were exploring ways of increasing their net profit and discussing how co-operation could contribute to this pleasant prospect. One observer at their sessions recognized and remarked on the fundamental change in the agrarian movement manifested by these businessmen-farmers:

> The men who attended the Farmers' Co-operative Congress...are men who are in earnest. They are not the class who at one time organized because they had a mortgage on their farms, because they do not have mortgages on their land. They talked of money to build factories and mills and warehouses. It was far from a calamity meeting and because of that it was more interesting. One of the main points they make is that the farmer must be educated

> to his business and so through their influence agricultural colleges have been built and more will be built.[108]

Another observer at the Congress wrote afterward:

> There were delegates to this congress from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, yet there was no hint or suggestion of sectional feeling or prejudice, nothing but perfect peace and good will, quick intelligence, unbounded enthusiasm and stern determination. Rarely, if ever has so large and so representative a body met in convention assembled, remained in session for so long a time and concluded its deliberations with never a discord nor a suggestion of ill will having marred its proceedings.[109]

This was a heart-filling experience for the man who had lavished so much of his physical and mental energies on the farmer's cause for so many years. His summary remarks on the Congress reveal the happiness it brought him:

> ...we need not be surprised if this great organization [the Union] sweeps over the North and West faster than it did over the South.
>
> This great organization is to be national, in fact as well as name.
>
> The very best of feeling prevailed throughout the entire three days of this great meeting.

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[108] Ibid., October 28, 1906. The editorial next devoted a paragraph each to several very successful farmers at the Congress, such as Campbell Russell, well-to-do live stock breeder of Russell, Indian Territory, whose animals took many prizes at the St. Louis exposition and wherever they were shown. Russell was one of the Directors elected at the first Texarkana National convention.

[109] National Co-Operator, November 21, 1906, quoting editorial in the Farmer Advocate of Kansas.

> While it was purely a business meeting, yet, it partook of the nature, in many respects, of a religious meeting. It was one continual love feast from beginning to end, and, when finally its labors were over, the congress did not want to adjourn. No one wanted to say goodbye.
>
> As old-time friends, and new-made friends took final leave of each other, it was a great scene. The greatest we have ever witnessed. Never before have we seen such expressions of love and confidence. It shows that the producers of this country are to be brethren, indeed and in truth, and that this great work so well begun will go on and on till the producers will have that perfect understanding which will lead to the freedom of the race.[110]

This was the only meeting of the Farmers' Co-Operative Congress. Permanent organization was purposely not set up, but a committee of five was appointed to draw up an agreement by which the different co-operative organizations could become absorbed into the Union. It was felt that by the following year the Union would be so strong in the West and Northwest that such a congress would virtually be a national meeting of the Union. After adjournment, the executive committee of the National Union decided to put organizers in Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and other

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[110] National Co-Operator, October 31, 1906, editorial. These remarks reveal the character of the editor, too, as do the words of this "squib" found in the same issue: "Some say there is nothing in a name, but "The National Co-Operator" is significant of constructive effort and collective power, and a builder of united life--the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. The name implies unity and strength, love and friendship, hence The National Co-Operator will never be found on the side of the disintegrators and destructive forces."

western and northwestern states to swell the total membership of the Union, which was then estimated at three-quarters of a million.[111]

While progress of the National Union was going forward in a most satisfactory manner, the Texas Union was still at odds over the manner of voting on the National Union constitution as adopted at the September meeting. This constitution was the one adopted by the Board of Ten in the beginning, amended to make it serve for the new arrangement. The Board of Ten had required a two-thirds vote of the entire membership in order to amend the constitution, but it was felt a two-thirds vote would be impossible to obtain in view of the fact no one could be sure what the total membership was. With approval of legal counsel, it was decided to count as affirmative all those who failed to vote. Most of the Texas locals promptly voted in the required manner with no protest, but others, especially where there was still strong feeling that the Union was besieged by "professional men,"[112] refused to take a vote. This prompted probably the severest criticism of Union members Pyle ever wrote:

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[111] Topeka Daily Capital, October 25 and 24, 1906. See Taylor, The Farmers' Movement, 347, 348, for figures on the rapid growth of the Union in these states.

[112] National Co-Operator, November 14, 1906.

> Many trouble-breeders in the camp have done much to retard the progress of the movement, but they are falling by the wayside, and there is naught to do but to go forward. The National Constitution has been overwhelmingly ratified by the Locals, and work can now begin in earnest...A better lot of National officials could not have been selected at Texarkana. Our National president is one of the really great men of this Nation. To know him is to love him. The way now to go forward as we should is to stand by our officials, both State and National. A constant warfare on our officials is a crime, and those who have engaged in it must answer for this great crime, but there is absolutely no excuse and no forgiveness for it. But surely the days of such criminals are numbered. It has been a hard fight, but the victory is now won.[113]

Some of the "dirt farmers" in Scurry and adjacent counties decided to set up an "actual farmers organization" called the "Cotton Growers Union of Texas." Their motives were explained and defended by the editor of the Southern Mercury in much the same vein as his attack on Pyle and Gresham the year before:

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[113] Ibid., December 19, 1906. Barrett described these trouble-makers thus: "Another favorite device of these sons of Belial is to attack from ambush the 'soft snaps' and 'fat cinches' of the officials. They very skilfully appeal to the intelligence and the conceit of members. They will say, 'Why just look at that fellow! He isn't any smarter than you are, and yet you pay him $5.00 a day, the idea, $5.00 a day! Why you sweat in the sun and shiver in the cold and arise at the crack of day, and you do not make nearly that much. Why should he not be satisfied to work for what you do if he has the welfare of the Union so closely at heart?'...Brethren, it takes money to buy brains now-a-days...We have as brainy men in our ranks as any body of equal proportions. We can find leaders big enough to fight our battles and fence with the most subtle of enemies if we are willing to pay them the price. Which is the rarer: the talent of the faithful soldier, or the talent of the able commander?" Mission, History, and Times, 38. This was written in 1908.

We regret that the shortsightedness and dictatorial spirit of some men high in influence and authority in the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America has brought about these unfortunate conditions [alleged need to organize a new group]--and we regret that Texas has furnished men who are largely responsible for these deflections, and destructive elements...

There is no use to condemn the men who originated..."The Cotton Growers' Union of Texas." They are influenced, we believe, by honest motives, to preserve the rights and advance the interests of their fellow farmers. They have despaired of getting a square deal from the National, and have grown tired of the subtle and untiring efforts in Texas on the part of a little coterie to regain ascendancy after being repeatedly rebuked and rejected by the Union people of Texas. The Western farmers have grown heartily tired of all this wire-working and unpleasant bickering, and therefore, they now attempt to start an organization in which, by the exclusion of non-farmers, they vainly hope to guard against all such troubles, and be rid of what they style "Pyleism." They point to the securing of bogus charters, the suppression of important minutes, the persistent avoidance of investigation of official accounts on the part of an element which, through misrepresentations, have managed to play successfully upon the prejudices of men in other States, and thereby make themselves "solid" abroad, even though repudiated at home. They point to these matters, as well as to the insidious assaults from within upon the referendum and other vital principles, and cite the fact that even at the last Texarkana meeting the rights of Oklahoma and Indian Territory and Texas were trampled upon by the selection, on the part of the majority, of men from Indian Territory and Texas as executive committeemen, who could not get the endorsement of their respective States, yet were elected over the protest of their respective State delegations--a gross violation of the right of local self-government. [Ability, not local self-government, was the issue in selecting men like Campbell Russell for the executive committee of the National Union.] These things, followed, too,

> by this unique way of counting votes not cast, has made many of the most faithful, zealous and disinterested members grow despondent of getting a square deal from the National end, and apprehensive that the bogus charter element might yet manipulate matters so cunningly as to gain control "by hook or by crook" even in Texas, and thereby shatter the organization. This move to start anew and bar out all who are not strictly farmers arises, therefore, quite naturally, for it must be conceded that the abuses just alluded to naturally produced more or less friction and dissatisfaction among the zealous, honest rank and file...
>
> ...This organization [the Union] has cost too [much] to permit it to go to pieces from the evil acts of designing men.[114]

There was considerably more abuse in this same editorial and there were other editorials like this in other issues. How can such twisting of facts and deliberate misrepresentations be explained? This editorial was written by Milton Park, ex-Confederate soldier, who, with Harry Tracy, established the Southern Mercury in 1880.[115] In its heyday as the official organ of the Texas Alliance, the paper had a wide circulation. Park is listed in some official capacity in the Populist party conventions of 1900, 1902, and 1904, and was secretary of the brief attempt to revive the party in 1908.[116]

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[114] Southern Mercury, December 24, 1906, editorial.

[115] Dallas News, May 9, 1914, obituary of Milton Park.

[116] Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, 423, 453, 461, 511.

A search through Mercury files for the early years of the Farmers' Union reveals that this infant organization was ignored until it began to command respect with its large membership. Gradually the Mercury began to run more and more stories on Union activities, and then announced a weekly Farmers' Union department, mentioning in the same issue "that most excellent journal, the National Co-Operator, published and edited by O. P. Pyle, at Mineola."[117] Park, whose farm organization and political party had passed out of the picture, gradually ingratiated himself into the robust new movement, and became president of the Dallas local. In April, 1905, he bought the Password, which was Gresham's paper originally and had changed hands twice. This little paper had been called "the original Farmers' Union journal," so after its purchase the Southern Mercury and Farmers' Union Password could claim to play a more vital role in Union affairs.

It would be logical to expect a professional man to support his fellow-editors in Union rows, but there were far more "dirt farmers" than there were professional men in the Union ranks and they were easily led. As had been mentioned, the Mercury viciously attacked Pyle and Gresham in the matter of organizing a National Union, and at the end of 1906 Parkwas keeping

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[117] Southern Mercury, March 23, 1905.

the pot boiling by such editorials as the one quoted. One month later he admitted that, counting all who actually voted, considerably over two-thirds of the Texas members had ratified the National constitution.[118] Nothing more was heard of the rump organization around Abilene. Apparently Park decided "if you can't beat them, join them," for on March 4, 1907, the National Co-Operator absorbed the Southern Mercury. Pyle continued to be the managing editor and Latham the general manager, and beginning with the March 20 issue Park was listed as an editor. A month earlier the Co-Operator had changed to regular newspaper size, six columns to the page, sixteen pages. With the merger, the number of pages was cut to eight.[119]

Letters of congratulations on the merger poured into the Co-Operator office from Union members in Texas and in other states, some letters mixing praise of Pyle with praise of his paper. The following are samples:

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[118] Southern Mercury, February 7, 1907.

[119] National Co-Operator, February 6, 1907, and March 20, 1907. Considering the tone of Park's past opposition, it is difficult to fathom Pyle's motives in this merger. The explanation most consistent with his character is that he believed it would benefit the Union by quieting the voice of this trouble-maker, and that he himself would gain morally and spiritually by changing a foe into a co-worker. This was one of the two worst mistakes of his life.

Bro. Pyle, you will please close your ears, and not hear what I am going to say to the brotherhood about you, not that it would give you the "big-head," but that you might regard it as insincere.

Brethren, O. P. Pyle is to the Farmers' Union what President Mitchell is to the Miners' Union. That is a great big "say," but nevertheless it is true.

...Bro. Pyle has carried a sweeping influence and has caused the membership to be as big a pile as it is to-day. I tell you if Pyle's work could possibly be removed from our ranks all at one time, we would see a great "big pile" roll off, and our "pile" would not be such a power. The beloved Newt Gresham repeatedly declared Br. Pyle to be a "broad-gauged man," and sought his counsel on many occasions.

I refer to this to show what an efficient tutor we have through the Co-Operator.[120]

Dear Bro. Pyle: I am certainly gratified to know that we are to have one great National paper. I have watched your good work so long that I am never surprised at any good thing you do. I am sure we are now to have entire harmony...Comrade Park...has done a great work for the industrial development of our beloved country, and has always been true and stood like a stone wall for what he thought to be right. But the time was here when he should entrust the work to younger hands...the National Co-Operator... is the greatest weekly publication in Texas

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[120]National Co-Operator, March 13, 1907, letter from Alfonso Russell, County Lecturer, Lawrence County, Monticello, Mississippi.

> Only two years old. What a mighty young giant![121]

> On Saturday we had an open-door meeting at the court house. Our esteemed brother and former fellow-citizen, O. P. Pyle, editor of the greatest paper in the South...made one of his characteristic speeches to the great delight of all. Always happy and jolly, he seemed to be in one of his best moods. The people of the county have a warm place in their hearts for O. P. Pyle. It was here he began his career as a champion of the cause of the farmer, nearly twenty years ago. In all this time he has enjoyed the entire confidence of the farmers of this section, as he does now of the nation. He spoke at Forest Hill that night to a large audience.[122]

> The main feature of the evening, however, was the address of Hon. O. P. Pyle, editor of what we in Delta County believe to be the greatest paper published...The address created a profound impression among all classes and callings and did untold good to the cause here.[123]

> The mayor's address of welcome was responded to at 2:30 in the afternoon by O. P. Pyle, editor of...the greatest paper in the world. After a brief reply to the address of welcome, Brother Pyle launched into the subject at hand, and gave a most interesting

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[121] Ibid., April 10, 1907, letter from L. L. Rhodes, dated March 8, 1907. L. L. Rhodes was a brother of O. H. Rhodes of the Board of Ten and was one of the Populists who turned Socialist. He was Socialist candidate for lieutenant-governor in 1904.

[122] Ibid., letter from J. W. Park, of Mineola, reporting on Wood County Union.

[123] Ibid., May 1, 1907, letter from R. D. Tanner of Cooper, reporting on the Delta County Union.

> history of our great Order...For two full hours he held the vast audience as but few men can hold an audience. So well pleased were our people with his great effort that they pleaded with me to get him to stay over and make another address the next afternoon, which he did. Again for nearly two hours he held the audience, a much larger one than the day before, even better than the day before. Brother Pyle was a general favorite with our people, who look forward to the time when he will again visit our county.[124]

The summer of 1907 was a happy one for Editor Pyle. He and his family were enjoying life in Dallas, the Co-Operator was thriving, and he was finding an occasion now and then to invest in property.[125] The cotton farmers were beginning to share in the country's general prosperity; those who had held out for 11¢ for their 1906 crop had gotten it, and there was talk of holding the 1907 crop for 15¢. Both the National and the Texas Unions were tranquil and making great strides in membership. In Texas the Union had built over three hundred warehouses in which to store members' cotton and a Central Sales Agency had been established

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[124]Ibid., July 17, 1907, W. T. Loudermilk reporting on a three-day encampment rally at Comanche on July 13, 14, and 15.

[125]Ibid., March 3, 1907, full-page ad on land in the Panhandle for sale by the Co-Operator's editor. According to the writer's cousins, Frank Donavan and Dexter Cooper, one of the investments Pyle made was in a block of land near Plano along the Dallas-Dennison interurban.

at Houston as a clearinghouse through which its cotton could be moved to market. Farmers were beginning to attend cotton-classing schools set up by the Union, and altogether indications showed the farmers were progressing toward control of their own products in pricing and marketing. The Texas legislature had passed a law destroying the bucket shops, a bill the Co-Operator had fought for long and earnestly.[126]

Then came October 22, when the Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York crashed, pulling down with it other inflated titans of finance. The "money panic of 1907" was on, bringing ruin to businessmen all across the country. For O. P. Pyle it set off a chain of events that spelled utter tragedy.

The Union warehouse venture was an early casualty of the panic. Several thousand bales of cotton were in storage in the Houston warehouse and the owners had borrowed money on their holdings. After the crash banks began to call loans, and it was necessary to secure financial aid in order not to sacrifice on the price. E. A. Calvin, head of the Central Sales Agency, sold cotton without the owners' authorization to an English firm that offered financial aid, and

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[126]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 86, National Co-Operator, October 31, 1906, and others. A bucket shop is an office where bets may be made in the form of orders or options based on current exchange prices of securities or commodities, but without any actual buying or selling of the property. See Appendix C.

also bought futures on some of the cotton he sold. This branded him a rank traitor in the eyes of many Union men, especially the new president, D. J. Neill, who considered any dealing in cotton futures as unvarnished gambling. Ignoring Calvin, Neill made arrangements with W. L. Moody and Company of Galveston to handle Union cotton on a commission basis. As the Union agency had posed an enormous threat to this company, the Moody officials were delighted to be given such an advantageous position, and reports began to circulate that Neill was personally profiting from this move.[127] The Union had given Calvin full authority to head the Central Sales Agency and handle Union cotton, but Neill had no authority from the Union to meddle in this business. Calvin and Neill became bitter enemies and Calvin became the target for the same sort of sniping Pyle had endured in years past.

Some time in November Pyle and Neill, who were on good terms, discussed ways of advancing the market for cotton and decided to influence M. H. Thomas, a Dallas broker, to get into the cotton business. Neill wrote a letter to Thomas promising that if Thomas would assist in keeping the price of cotton up, the Union would stand by a minimum price and would reduce acreage on the 1908 crop, but Thomas would not

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[127] Ibid., 86-88.

agree to the suggestion until he had Neill's guarantee in person. After meeting Neill twice in Dallas, Thomas "went into the market."[128] Pyle's motive for his part in this incident was his concern for supporting the price of the 1907 crop being held valiantly by Union members, who were finding it almost impossible to borrow on their stored cotton due to the sudden scarcity of money. There is a possibility that Neill planned this incident as a trap, or, stung by his cronies' taunts that he was dealing with a broker, he may have thought he could allay suspicion of his own motives by attributing them to Pyle. In any event, he trumped up a ridiculously false accusation that Pyle wanted to get the bucket shop law repealed at the next session of the Legislature.

Because Calvin had bought cotton futures, Neill included him in his accusation. Neill "spent a good deal of his energy in pouring out tirades against" the New York cotton Exchange and all other legitimate cotton exchanges, lumping them with the recently outlawed bucket shops in such a way as to throw strong doubt on his understanding of economic processes.[129] Although the bucket shop menace had been eliminated by law, that did not deter Neill from resurrecting it as a weapon in trying to eliminate from the Texas Union its two

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[128]Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908. Dallas Morning News, April 4, 1943, obituary of Mike H. Thomas states that he was at that time the largest Dallas cotton merchant, at one time cornered the U. S. cotton market, and was reputed to be worth $20,000,000.

[129]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 88-89.

strongest leaders, Pyle and Calvin, both of whom had been instrumental in getting the bucket shops outlawed.

The steps by which Neill proceeded in his attack have an unreal, nightmare quality when read in the cold, plain words of newspaper reports. The clue that throws light on an otherwise inexplicable series of incidents is the character of D. J. Neill. One of the organizers who worked with him for many years has said that Neill wanted desperately to be "top dog," but had no understanding of diplomacy and could not get along with anyone more than a short while. He had a well-developed persecution complex and it always came to the fore whenever things did not go as he wanted them to.[130] When rumors began to circulate about his arrangements with the Moody Company, Neill "aroused a good deal of sympathy by publishing articles in which he claimed he was receiving letters threatening his life. Some of his opponents, however, accused him of having letters mailed to himself."[131]

There is no clue to Neill's actions to be found in his earlier relationship to Pyle. According to one of the delegates [an editor] to the State Union convention in August, 1907, "O. P. Pyle did more to elect Neill president than any other man. In fact, Pyle was the second man in the state to

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[130] R. D. King, June 8, 1957. Neill was state organizer before he was president. King was an organizer and knew Neill well.

[131] Hunt, Farmer Movements, 89.

advocate the candidacy of Neill (Neill being the first)."[132] In early October the new president urged each local secretary to write to the Co-Operator, which would publish all official notices from State headquarters. "Bro. Pyle will do all this free to the State Union..."[133] Neill endorsed Pyle, his paper, and his policies fully. On October 19, State Secretary C. Smith issued an equally strong endorsement, saying that, as it would "bankrupt the state treasury" to send out from headquarters all the necessary information individually to locals, headquarters would thenceforth "put all communications from week to week in the National Co-Operator." Smith announced further:

> The president of each local union must get the paper and see that he takes it to each meeting of his local. The local secretaries should act as agents for the paper and see that each member of the local gets it. Every member of our organization should read our paper. If this could be done, we would take the state for unionism in a short while. It would so stimulate the movement that nothing could prevail against it...Please remember that in the future all official communications, except those of the secret nature, will appear in the Co-Operator, and in order to keep fully posted you must read our paper.[134]

This was the state of cordiality prevailing between Pyle and the Texas headquarters in November when Neill made

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[132] Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908. 4.

[133] National Co-Operator, October 9, 1907, Neill's signed statement in front page box.

[134] Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908. 4.

his arrangements with the broker, Thomas. The next step may be told in Pyle's own words:

> A few days later Neill sent for me to meet him at his office in Fort Worth which I did. At this meeting Neill told me that there was a great conspiracy on foot to force me out of the Co-Operator by a certain interest putting the paper into the hands of said interest to use it and the Union to elect E. A. Calvin governor of Texas, for the purpose of reinstating the bucket shops in Texas. I told him that I did not believe there was such a conspiracy, but I would investigate it. I did so and found beyond any question that there was no truth in the charge.[135]

Near the end of December Neill sent several of the daily newspapers a signed statement that he had discovered a "conspiracy" to destroy the Farmers' Union. Just at this time locals were electing delegates to an open meeting of the National Union to be held in Memphis the first week of January, for the purpose of reducing cotton acreage and holding the next crop for 15¢.[136] Neill sent out a circular to a few members of the Union in Texas, reading as follows:

> Headquarters, Farmers' Union of Texas
> Fort Worth, Texas, December 27, 1907
>
> Dear Sir and Brother:
>
> There is forming in this state a great conspiracy that means, if successful, the disruption

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[135] Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908.

[136] Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908, 5. See Appendix D for a full account of this meeting.

> of the Farmers' Union. This element will try to reinstate the bucket shops in this state.
>
> They have tried to intimidate me--threatened me and said they would black me until my friends would not know me. They tried to buy some of our people and will likely get some, as a number are now under suspicion.
>
> I hereby invite you to a conference at Fort Worth, January 4, 1908, for the purpose of taking some steps to counteract this plot. Don't fail to come, as it is imperative that you should.
>
> This matter should be kept strictly within the Union. Get your county Union to pay expenses, but come...
>
> Signed, D. J. Neill, Pres.
> Credentials Seal.[137]

Stanley H. Watson, of Brenham, Texas, editor of the Southwestern Farmer, happened to go to Fort Worth to take advantage of a reduced rail rate offered the delegates to the Memphis meeting. Arriving there on Saturday, January 4, he found delegates from various sections of the state gathering for a meeting at Labor Temple. He wrote of this meeting:

> I found that I could not get into the meeting without credentials--not the kind that delegates had from their various county unions, but secret and confidential credentials issued by D. J. Neill personally. I found that B. F. Chapman, state lecturer and organizer, O. H. O'Keefe, state business agent, O. P. Pyle and George B. Latham of the Co-Operator were also barred out.

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[137]Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908.

At about 6 o'clock the same evening we were finally admitted to the meeting. It developed that we had been tried, convicted and sentenced by a gathering of union members who denied by specific resolution that they were holding a Farmers' Union meeting. [But the County Unions paid their expenses.] Tried, convicted and sentenced without a hearing. I am glad that there were enough fair people in the meeting to save the union from disaster by denying that it was a Farmers' Union meeting and by calling us in before the execution of their sentence.

It developed that we had been charged with the "conspiracy" which President Neill had "discovered" and of which he said in the daily newspapers that he would drive its members to the jungles at the Memphis meeting. Charged in the public press with conspiring against the union, tried by an unauthorized body of men, called together in secret and without a hearing!

And the conspiracy was to restore the "bucket shops" to Texas! The evidence was the unsupported statement of men who in testifying repeated private personal conversations!

The charges were so absurd, the foundation so slim, the conclusions so far fetched and the evidence so unreliable that it is astonishing that sensible men should have wasted a day's time over it.

The evidence against me was an editorial from Southwestern Farmer in which I questioned the wisdom of the law that closed the legitimate cotton exchanges of this state! When I explained to the brethren present that I had consistently held to the convictions expressed in the editorial under discussion ever since the beginning of the agitation for that particular law, and that I made no secret of it, it was accepted as satisfactory.

The evidence against Chapman was that he had once notified Calvin that the state executive committee was to hold a meeting at which, presumably, Calvin was not wanted! It seems that

> some people never do want to have their victims around when they try them for various imaginary things. Chapman, according to what I could learn, was convicted for telling Calvin something Calvin had a right to know, Chapman had a right to tell, and those complaining should have been ashamed to conceal. Brother O'Keefe was excluded from the meeting with the rest of us, but I never learned upon what evidence he was convicted; probably on the broad general grounds of being Irish and not sufficiently subservient to the administration.
>
> Pyle and Latham were convicted largely because Pyle told W. O. Laudermilk that he preferred not to write confidential letters, but always preferred to handle confidential matters in personal conversation. It appears also that Pyle told Sam Hampton that he would buy Hampton a farm if he was able to close a deal then pending. The whole trouble was childish, disgusting and unwarranted.[138]

According to Pyle, the "accused" were requested to sign a set of libelous resolutions, which had been prepared and adopted during this kangaroo affair, but they, of course, refused to do so.[139]

At the Memphis meeting a caucus of the Texas delegates was held on January 9, at which Pyle and Calvin denounced the report of a conspiracy in strong terms and demanded a hearing before an authorized body of Union men. At another caucus later in the day, the Texas delegates, over a hundred farmers from all of Texas (not a handpicked few) unanimously adopted

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[138] Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908, 5, 6.

[139] Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908.

a resolution providing that a committee be appointed by President Neill to investigate the cases and report the facts to the membership. There was nothing for Neill to do but appoint a committee. The date of the hearing was set for Wednesday, January 15, in the Fort Worth headquarters.[140]

On Tuesday afternoon, January 14, Neill telephoned Pyle in Dallas and said that the committee would not meet. Pyle said he would go to Fort Worth the next morning anyway, Neill replied, "Well," and the conversation ended.[141]

Calvin went from Houston to Dallas Tuesday night and on Wednesday morning Pyle, Calvin, and Latham took the 9:00 interurban car for Fort Worth. Arriving at Union headquarters at 10:30, they met Neill in the hall and shook hands with him. They talked with other visitors in the various offices and in the hall for an hour or more, and then the three of them went into Secretary Smith's office and began a conversation with Neill. There were six other people in the office, including Smith, Sam Hampton, and two young women employees. Calvin, as spokesman for the three, demanded a hearing and asked why the committee had been notified not to meet. Neill replied that two of the committeemen were ill, but admitted that the hearing was called off some time before they were taken ill.

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[140] Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908, and Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908.

[141] Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908, signed statement of O. P. Pyle.

They then asked by what authority he had taken that action. The exchange of words was heated from the beginning and became violent when Calvin told Neill plainly "that he was manager of the Farmers' Union Cotton company, and he wanted him to keep his hands and nose out of his business."[142] Calvin also accused Neill of concocting the story about a conspiracy to make Calvin governor. Neill denied it. Pyle told Neill that he surely did say it. Neill called Pyle a "_____ _____ _____" liar, and an affray ensued in which Neill was struck on the forehead with the metal seal of the Union, the glass door of the office was smashed, and furniture was overturned.

In the sudden confusion of such an encounter it is understandable that those involved, as well as eyewitnesses, should have a rather hazy idea afterward of exactly what happened. Neill said that Pyle seized the metal seal suddenly and aimed it at his head, but that he threw up his arm and partially warded off the blow. Pyle said Neill started to strike him with the seal, but he took the seal from Neill and did nothing except to ward off the attack Neill made upon him. Six employees of the Union made a statement to the papers that Pyle picked up the seal and struck Neill on the forehead with it, Neill partially warding off the blow with

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[142] Fort Worth Record, January 18, 1908, letter of George B. Latham to the editor.

one arm, and that Neill did not strike Pyle nor attempt to strike him, while Pyle was the agressor all the way through. They said they saw Latham pick up a paper weight from the table and strike Neill with it. Latham sent a statement to the papers denying emphatically that he struck a blow with his fist, a paper weight, or anything else. He stated that Neill was not attacked but did the attacking himself and that Pyle merely defended himself from Neill's assault, Neill having become enraged because Calvin charged that Hampton, not Neill, was acting as president of the Union. Strangely enough, no one accused Calvin of striking a blow or taking any part in the fracas. Calvin said later Neill was to blame for the trouble.

At the end of the fisticuffs, Neill went across the hall to lie down in another office. Pyle, Calvin, and Latham remained in the hall fifteen minutes or more and then left the building. Later in the afternoon Neill dictated a statement for the papers:

> Knowing that fragments of conversation and partial facts will reach the press and through the press the people, I deem it best to make a personal statement of the facts as they occurred in connection with the assault made upon me today by O. P. Pyle and George B. Latham in my private office at Farmers' Union Headquarters.
>
> I have known for some time that there has been a conspiracy on foot to either disrupt the Farmers' Union of Texas or to induce it to change its mind on the question of bucket

> shops in order that the bucket shop law might be repealed at the next session of the legislature. I have been doing everything in my power to thwart the efforts of the men who have been in this conspiracy and to forestall their efforts. In my efforts to keep the conspiracy from making inroads upon the Farmers' Union, I have incurred the enmity of O. P. Pyle, editor, and George B. Latham, business manager of the National Co-Operator. They visited headquarters today and I told them they were not welcome and that I did not believe they were the friends of the Farmers' Union, upon which they attacked me, taking me unawares. Pyle struck me in the head with a heavy metal seal and Latham with a paperweight. The above are the cold facts. D. J. Neill, President of the Farmers' Union of Texas.[143]

On January 17 Pyle and Latham were served with warrants for their arrest and were admitted to an appearance bond in the sum of $200.00 each to answer in the Tarrant county courts. The charge was aggravated assault. On the same day the executive committee of the Union released a report on the trouble:

> To the Officers and Members of the Farmers' Union of Texas
>
> Brothers: We, your state executive committee, have made a careful, thorough investigation of the trouble which occurred at headquarters on the 15th of this month--January--and we find as follows:
>
> First: That a brutal assault was made upon President D. J. Neill, in his private office, by O. P. Pyle and George B. Latham of the National Co-Operator.

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[143]The order of events on January 15, 1908, has been pieced together from news stories and statements in the Dallas

> Second: That President Neill is entirely blameless, and conducted himself in a manner creditable to himself and the organization he represents--the Farmers' Union.
>
> We make the above statement because we find articles appearing in the daily and weekly press, giving accounts of the occurrence which in no way resemble the truth, but unquestionably published for the purpose of creating discord in the ranks of the lay members of the Farmers' Union of this state.
>
> W. T. Loudermilk, Chairman,
> Peter Radford, J. T. Montgomery,
> H. Laas, J. C. Albritton, State
> Executive Committee, Farmers'
> Union of Texas.[144]

In reporting this affair to his readers, Editor Watson pointed out that the executive committee merely echoed Neill's statement, even to the mistaken location of the fight, and stated: "If the state executive committee was unable to learn where the fight occurred I am doubtful of their ability to accurately measure the other evidence submitted." Principals and witnesses said the fight took place in Smith's office.[145] Watson remarked:

> As to the "brutality of the assault I am led to believe from President Neill's general appear-

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Morning News, Fort Worth Record, and Houston Daily Post. The writer's mother always spoke of this incident as "Mr. Pyle's fight," it being his first and only involvement in physical violence since boyhood. She said he would not have lost his temper this time had Neill not cast aspersions on his parentage.

[144] Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908, 4.

[145] There were other discrepancies in statements from headquarters. Neill and others told the press that Thomas

> ance and customary language that he indulged in some extremely provoking remarks just before the trouble started, and at any rate he is reasonably husky and able to take care of himself in rough and tumble. If President Neill were an invalid or cripple there might be some room for the brutality charge. President Neill, however, said it was brutal (and doubtless he thought it was), and the state executive committee faithfully echoed "brutal."
>
> Neill says that he was assaulted by Pyle and George B. Latham. Latham says he did not strike Neill. Sam F. Hampton, C. Smith and Bro. Binyon assert that they saw Latham strike Neill in the back of the head. If that is a fact, then Hampton, Smith and Binyon displayed more discretion than courage when they allowed Latham to get out of that room without a scratch.

As to whether Neill was "blameless", Watson reviewed events leading up to the fight, including the kangaroo court and the resolution adopted by the caucus in Memphis, demanding a committee of investigation, which committee Neill arbitrarily dismissed. Watson then summed up the situation:

> Blameless, when...he called together certain picked members of the union to take action upon his charges against men who had every reason to regard him as a friend. Blameless, when he excludes those men from a meeting of union delegates who pass resolutions condemning them. Blameless, when, after the people

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was with Pyle, Latham, and Calvin that day, which they said was entirely false. Thomas stated to the press he was not even in Fort Worth on that day.

> through their accredited delegates demand a fair trial of these men, he vetoes that demand and condemns them to remain under a cloud of suspicion brought on by his unproven charges. If that be "blameless" to the minds of the executive committee, then in the sacred name of justice, is there anything in the calendar of iniquity that would cause them to blame the president?[146]

In his statement to the papers giving the facts of the situation as he saw it, Pyle said:

> I have been charged with being a conspirator to reinstate the bucket shops in Texas. I am now, always have been, and always will be, opposed to the bucket shops, and I denounce the charge as simply infamous.
>
> There is an unseen hand working in this matter to try to destroy the Union. This hand will be developed in the near future and many a good Union man will wake up to the fact that he has been most woefully duped.[147]

A number of good Union men must have already begun to wake up to the way they had been used, for after being told that the resolutions they signed at the kangaroo court would be supressed, they now found these circulars were being mailed out to the membership. The statement said in part:

> 1. We find from what we consider irrefragable evidence that certain business interests, with public reputation as institutions directly connected with the Farmers' union, have entered into combinations with advocates

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[146] Southwestern Farmer, February, 1908, 5.

[147] Houston Daily Post, January 19, 1908.

> of bucket shops wherein the grossest forms of gambling, not to say swindling, are practiced; that said combinations are predicated upon the theory that the Texas legislature made a great mistake in legislating bucket shops out of existence.
>
> 2. It is a fact that proprietors of certain newspapers in our state are active in the combination aforesaid.
>
> 3. It is a fact that members of this supposed combination have attempted to influence officers and members of the union to co-operate with these combinations.
>
> Resolved, That the Farmers' union has no newspaper organ, while grateful for honest co-operation of all newspapers. Therefore, the Farmers' union should not be held responsible for the action of certain newspaper proprietors who go into any combination, the intention of which is to work for the repeal of laws prohibiting bucket shops, or other gambling enterprises.
>
> Resolved, That this conference...pledge its delegates to the support of Brother D. J. Neill in his great fight in defense of the Farmers' union, and further pledge ourselves to stand by him and that he be instructed to expose any and all attacks made upon the Farmers' union of Texas.[148]

On the basis of these circulars, Pyle and Latham brought suit against Neill and the executive committee enjoining them from sending out any more. The Record Publishing Company was made a party to the injunction. In this suit Pyle and Latham also asked libel damages of Neill, the executive committee, and the publishing company for $100,000. Judge Thomas F. Nash of the 14th District Court in Dallas

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[148] Fort Worth Record, January 16, 1908. As for "official organs", an editorial in Co-Operator March 25, 1908, by Pyle states: "When the Texas State Farmers' Union was

granted a temporary restraining order until February 7, 1908, which prohibited Neill and the Record from publishing any statements until that date. Neill made the most of his chance to play the role of the martyr.[149]

On January 31, N. C. Murray of Kingston, who had worked with Pyle in the Union from the beginning, got a group of about twenty "non-office holding members who have no part in the dissensions" to meet in Dallas in an effort to restore harmony. They asked that both sides drop court actions. Pyle made a proposition which a "harmony committee" took to Neill, but they were unsuccessful in their efforts.[150] On February 7, Judge Nash dissolved the temporary injunction, but did not rule on the libel charge. The

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organized in Mineola, in February, 1904, a motion was made to make the Mineola Courier...the "official organ" of the State Union. We took the floor and prevented the passage of the resolution...we needed the support of all the papers ...and will have it so long as the press is treated right... We did the same in the National meeting at Little Rock."

[149]Hunt, Farmer Movements, 90, and Dallas Semi-Weekly Farm News, February 7, 1908.

[150]Dallas Semi-Weekly Farm News, February 4, 1908. For several days after the altercation at headquarters, the daily papers printed stories on the situation in the Union, but suddenly no more stories appeared. This small semi-weekly paper continued to report for another week or two and then as suddenly dropped the story. The Co-Operator did not refer to "the trouble" until February 26 and never ran any story on the fight or the incidents leading up to it. Pyle was faithful to the pledge he took upon joining the Union.

assault charge never came to trial.

One of the most puzzling features of this entire affair is that the officers of the Union were so easily misled. Some seem to have been like parrots who, having learned one word or sentence, repeat it at every opportunity. A prominent member of the Union, when interviewed at headquarters on the day after the fight, said:

> Yesterday's difficulty between Mr. Neill and certain leaders of the other side will work ultimately for drawing the lines so finely that only actual farmers, or at least only those who make farming their principal business will be allowed membership cards. All perils of the organization have been brought about by members of the union who were not actual farmers. But, as I said before, a change is scheduled. The farmer is coming into his own. He is going to take hold of and run things from now on and others will have to take routes other than those pursued by him in his fight for the position that justly should be his.[151]

On February 26, making his first reference in the Co-Operator to the troubles in the Texas Union, Pyle announced in a front page box that in the next edition he would tell about it "with no malice in my heart whatever, but with sorrow and pity for a few of our friends and brethren who have been made the victims of interested parties who have an ax to grind and want the Farmers' Union to turn the stone... Mountains are being made out of molehills." The following

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[151]Fort Worth Record, January 17, 1908.

week he announced that friends had advised him not to tell of the troubles as the "cause of all the trouble is misunderstanding."

Had Pyle been the vindictive type, he could have used his persuasive powers and his influence through his paper to smear Neill and his dupes and expose the whole silly machination for the fabricated lie it was, but that was not his way. Such action would have split the Texas Union asunder, whereas time and again he had stepped quietly aside in the interest of harmony and let less able men try to guide the state Union. He asked for neither glory nor honor but only to do his best for the cause. This time, however, the backstabbing had gone deeper than before. He had been struck down by a friend, and many others who had seemed to be his friends were willing to believe an enormous falsehood without question. This injustice, piled upon him when the panic was beginning to take its toll, had a most disturbing effect.

Advertisers were restricting their space or cancelling their contracts and subscribers were not renewing. Banks would not or could not extend payment time on loans and Pyle found himself losing his property investments and missing payments on equipment. An editorial in the March 19 Co-Operator gives the first hint of the struggle he was waging:

> To the many thousands of friends and readers of The Co-Operator we wish to say the panic and the holding movement have made it pretty hard

for The Co-Operator to keep going in its old-time degree of excellence...We wish to assure you, friends, that we have made this fight at a great personal sacrifice...Indeed, it does us good to know that it is generally conceded that The Co-Operator has done more than any other one agency, because of its great circulation, and because of much hard work we did...for the great cause we all love so well ...We have no ambition to pile up a lot of money...as the events of our life will abundantly show. We have only one ambition, and that is to see this great organization succeed, as a business organization, for business farmers...

and

Struggling to keep the paper going/to keep his personal finances solvent, Pyle yet had to worry about the Union difficulty. On March 25, he ran another front page box in "caps:"

THE SUPPOSED TEXAS TROUBLES

Judging from the letters we are now receiving, the news has gone abroad, evidently from some very unreliable source, that the Texas State Union has been sued. Such is not the case. Suits are now pending against some of the members of the Farmers' Union of Texas.

There has been trouble between some of the officials and some of the members of the organization in Texas. I am familiar with these troubles but I do not think it best to publish them outside of Union circles, but only to the Union people who want to know of them.

Anyone interested in this matter can obtain a full statement of facts if he will write to me for them. I do not wish to burden any one who is tired of the whole affair, as many thousands are. Write me personally if you want all the facts in the case.

Fraternally, O. P. Pyle

It is not likely that Editor Pyle was able to answer many of these inquiries, at least not on the Co-Operator's letterhead. The next issue of the paper carried a startling announcement on the front page:

> To the membership of Texas:
>
> Brothers Aaron Smith and M. S. Sweet have bought the Co-Operator, and it will be made the official organ of Texas.
>
> The Texas State Union is to have editorial control of said paper, and it will be strictly a union paper.
>
> Let us urge all to subscribe for the Co-Operator, and we should urge all to renew just as soon as possible, and help make the paper a success.
>
> All official announcements will be published in the Co-Operator.
>
> Yours truly,
>
> D. J. Neill, President

In an article entitled "The New Management," it was claimed that the Union had always wanted a newspaper owned and controlled by the organization, so the Co-Operator's entire plant, subscription list, and business had been purchased by the editor and was being held in trust by him for the State Union. Smith said he knew nothing of being chosen to edit the paper until the Executive Committee called him in. The first editorial under this new management asked farmers to send in any anonymous letter received slandering Neill, as many of last Fall are now "flying around again,"

put out by "gambling degenerates trying to blacken his character and dethrone him in dishonor."[152]

Pyle's health was a large factor in the decision to sell the Co-Operator. Had he had his usual abundant vitality, he would have found some way to continue in spite of financial reverses, but he was ill. Also, he had to consider the financial condition of his partners, Park and Latham. No doubt the Union was the only prospective buyer for such an enterprise as the Co-Operator.

Under a heading, "Goodbye," the Co-Operator's founder contributed his last words:

> With this issue, my connection with The National Co-Operator ceases. It has been sold to Bros. Aaron Smith and M. S. Sweet, who will move it to Fort Worth, where it will be published in the future. These gentlemen are honorable Union men, and are fully able, in all respects to make the paper a success and thus help to build the great organization for which it stands. In retiring from this field of work in our great organization, my zeal for our cause is not in any way lessened. I shall join the ranks and do what I can and all I can for the success of the cause for which I have given so many years of toil. I am very anxious to see the Co-Operator succeed, and it will succeed, if our people will give it the assistance they should. The many thousands of friends The Co-Operator has made will always be held in grateful remembrance.
>
> Fraternally, O. P. Pyle

No doubt Pyle sincerely expected to continue working

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[152]National Co-Operator, April 1, 1908.

in the ranks, but he reckoned without another blow of fate. The strain of the past three months brought on a nervous breakdown from which he did not recover for almost a year. The treachery of friends produced in his mind and heart a depression from which he could not easily recover. His illness was diagnosed as neurasthenia. After staying quietly at home for some time, he made no improvement and his doctors placed him in Arlington Heights Sanitarium in Fort Worth, which was reputed to give the best care of any hospital in Texas at that time for that type of illness.

Undoubtedly, Pyle's condition was due in some measure to the financial strain, but that was only contributory. Each of his friends who have been questioned about this period in his life has stated unhesitatingly that the crass mistreatment at the hands of Union members was the basic cause of his decline.[153]

Twice a week during all those months, little Susie rode the interurban to Fort Worth to visit her "Mr. Pyle" in the sanitarium, bringing him the love, courage, and confidence he needed for recuperation. Through the years he

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[153]Bob King stated that Neill was directly responsible for causing Pyle's mental depression. Mrs. Templeton, in a letter to the writer, February 11, 1957, wrote: "I believe the reason for the breakdown of your father was his innate honesty about the Union--he had seen it spread all over the U. S., but the wrong people in the right places brought it to ruin in Texas...I know his devotion and how he tried to carry on."

had carefully shielded her from all business cares, and her only contact with the commercial world had been the ordering of clothes, food, and household furnishings for her family. Now it was her turn to shield him against worry. She kept her troubles to herself so successfully that her sisters did not realize the full extent of the tragedy that had befallen the editor. Somehow she maintained the usual cheerful home-life for her children so that they were aware only that "Daddy" was away longer than he had ever been before. For income she sold the remaining property, piece by piece, including the Courier and its building, the Mineola farm, and the equipment in his Dallas office, all at panic prices.[154]

Gradually rest and time healed Pyle's shattered nerves and he began to be his old self again. When he was able to go home, there was a joyful family reunion. Then Susie found a buyer for the Dallas house and they moved the family and household back to the Mineola home, which, fortunately, she had been able to hold. Here Pyle started "from scratch" to build another career, using his talent for trading. He acquired two horses, which he traded for a defunct cotton gin, which he put into working condition and traded for a small piece of farm property. Taking advantage of the change in taste which relegated the family parlor organ to the attic

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[154]This is from the writer's memory of stories her mother told of this period.

in favor of the new piano, Pyle ordered a large number of pianos on consignment and sold them all at a nice profit.[155]

Stirred by accounts of the profits being made in the newly-discovered oil fields of Texas, Pyle decided to test whether there might be oil under the good Wood County farmland. He leased land on the edge of Mineola and brought in a driller, but the primitive equipment was not capable of drilling deep enough to find the oil that has since been discovered in that area.[156]

Pyle continued his trading until he had accumulated enough capital to go into the newspaper business again. In the spring of 1910 he made a deal with the owner of the Courier, a man named Thomas, whereby he could use the Courier equipment, and established The Progressive Farmer, a weekly devoted to encouraging scientific, business-like farm operations.

After a few months Pyle decided that a newspaper for the general public would provide more income, and a town that provided wider educational facilities would be better for his family. Having made a good trade in farmland that

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[155]Ellie Reaves, interview, August 27, 1956. Pyle bought a square, rosewood piano for his wife early in their married life. When it burned in the Mineola fire, he bought a red mahogany, upright piano, on which he and his wife played.

[156]J. W. Bogan, interview, August 28, 1956. Pyle leased Bogan's land.

netted him an excellent profit,[157] he had ready cash to invest when he learned that the town of Belton in Central Texas offered just what he wanted. He bought the Belton Journal-Reporter and the Bell County Democrat in June, 1911, and combined them into the Belton Journal, a weekly paper. He then bought a twelve-room house and moved his family into it in March, 1912.[158]

From the beginning of his association with the citizens of this dignified, old county-seat, O. P. Pyle was an honored leader of civic betterment projects. He and Dr. John Crumpton Hardy, president of Baylor College for Women, became close friends, and printing jobs for the college became an important part of the Journal's job-printing revenue. Both Pyle and his wife were devoted to church work and to promoting better schooling and cultural advantages for the town.

One reason Pyle chose Belton as his home rather than Dallas or another city was that physically he was not as strong as he had been before his breakdown, and he did not choose to enter competition that would require great expenditure of energy. He was forty-three, a comparatively young

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[157] Reaves interview.

[158] The reason for the delay in moving the family was the birth of the writer at the Gibson home in Alba in October, 1911, after which Mrs. Pyle was not able to undertake the task of moving for four months.

man, when he bought the Belton papers, but he had packed more action into his five and a half years with the Farmers' Union than many men experience in a lifetime. Mentally he was as keen and vigorous as at any time in his earlier years. Politics again absorbed much of his energy and he had more invitations to speak than his wife would permit him to accept.[159] At conventions he still preferred to stay in the background and use his influence for his friends;[160] although once in a while he consented to represent the governor at an intra-state gathering, such as the Southern Sociological Congress in Memphis in May, 1912.

One appointment he could not refuse because it involved improving working conditions for the common man. When the Employers' Liability Act became effective September 1, 1913, Governor O. B. Colquitt appointed as members of the first Industrial Accident Board Ex-Governor Joseph D. Sayers,

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[159]Senator Tom Connally said in a letter to the writer, March 1, 1957: "Politically he was a man of talent and independence and of high patriotism. He was a man of an unusually high order of citizenship and of regard for the public interest." The Senator enjoyed the support of Editor Pyle in speeches and editorials from his first campaign for office.

[160]Tom Love, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during World War I, told Mrs. Dyess in his Washington office in October, 1918, that he attributed his appointment directly to Pyle's sponsorship of him in his early career. Senator Morris Sheppard also expressed his appreciation of her father's support through the years.

chairman, William J. Moran, and O. P. Pyle. This first board created the organization by which this state agency has functioned since that time, and their report, submitted at the end of the first year, became the model for the Board's annual reports.[161]

Although he was not an active member of any farm organization during the last eleven years of his life, Pyle never abandoned his crusade. An examination of the Belton Journal files reveals that in almost every issue he found some way to give his farm readers advice and encouragement and to explain their problems sympathetically to the general public.[162]

Much of the editor's time between 1909 and 1919 was taken up with the trying of a case, twice in the Dallas District Court and twice in the Court of Civil Appeals in Amarillo and in Dallas, in which he was the plaintiff and Milton Park was the defendant. Pyle accused Park of breech of trusteeship involving the loss of over $5,000 Pyle suffered

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[161]Report of the Industrial Accident Board for the Year Ended August 31, 1914 (Austin, Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1914).

[162]Belton Journal, random issues. During January, February, and March, 1919, the editor ran a page-long article in almost every issue encouraging farmers to diversify their crops, raise more food crops, beef cattle, and hogs to meet world needs. He advised them to "aim for cash business all year instead of credit business once a year." Another noteworthy editorial on the farmer is found in the July 1, 1919, issue, in which Pyle praised the farmer, emphasized his worth to the nation and to the world, and said: "All the farmer wants is a square deal."

while he was ill in 1908 and early 1909. Pyle alleged in his suit that Park made a profit by dealing in trust property and that this profit should have inured to the benefit of Pyle. The court ruled that this transaction was outside of the obligations of the trust. Park had used confidential information available to him as trustee, but Pyle could obtain no remedy at law.[163]

Two very happy occasions for the editor were the passing of the prohibition amendment and the woman suffrage amendment. He had worked for both of these during all of his public life. How he exulted to see saloons converted into respectable cafés! He encouraged women to pay the poll tax, stating that the influence of women at the polls could cure many of the country's social ills.[164]

The editor's political activities brought him two unhappy and costly experiences. In October, 1913, while he was away on a speaking engagement, the Journal plant burned to the ground in the early hours of the morning. Evidence indicated that arson was the cause and the townspeople were convinced it had been prompted by a politician against whom Pyle

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[163]The two trials in the Court of Civil Appeals are reviewed in 157, S.W.R., 445, and 196 S.W.R., 243. The printed Brief of Appellant presented at the last trial was found among Mrs. Pyle's papers.

[164]Belton Journal, random issues in 1919. Texas voted for the prohibition amendment on May 24, 1919.

had been campaigning. This misfortune meant loss of several weeks' income while setting up a plant in another location, and the new equipment cost $4,000.00 more than the collectable insurance. Then at the State Democratic Convention in San Antonio in May, 1916, Pyle ate some fish at a banquet and became ill from ptomaine poisoning. As a result of the complications, he did not recover for six months.

The tragedies of World War I weighed heavily on the editor's humanitarian sympathies, and he was involved personally for his eldest son, Charles Weaver, was with the 90th Division of the American Expeditionary Force in France. Pyle worried about his son's safety and missed him sorely in running the newspaper, for Weaver had been his father's able assistant since purchase of the Belton paper.[165] Harold, the other son, was still in high school but he worked like a man and wrote editorials and articles on war news and world events that would have done credit to an editor of many years' experience.[166] In early March, 1919, Pyle slipped and fell down a long flight of stairs in his home, suffering internal injuries that defied his doctors' diagnosis. He was confined to bed but continued to direct his business and write for the paper, and after a few weeks was able to go to the sanitarium operated by his adopted brother, Dr. Jesse N. Pyle, in Mineral

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[165]Charles Weaver Pyle left the newspaper business in 1925. He was an oil lease broker at the time of his death in Houston, January 10, 1941.

[166]Harold Gibson Pyle inherited his father's writing ability, as he has ably demonstrated as Associate Editor of the Houston Chronicle.

Wells. The editor's eldest daughter, LaVera, hurried home from her war-time job in Washington at the beginning of his illness and undertook to publish the Journal with Harold's help until their soldier-brother returned from France. Charles Weaver brought his father home from Mineral Wells, but the editor was never able to recover from his illness. He returned to his brother's sanitarium in the late summer and lived long enough to see the first anniversary of the Armistice. On November 19, 1919, while sitting in a big chair in the sanitarium's lobby, and without even calling out to the nurse nearby, Owen Pinkney Pyle peacefully slipped out of this life. He was fifty-one years and eleven months old.

His family had known that no person who came to their tender-hearted husband and father with a plea for help ever went away ungratified, but they were not prepared for the flood of letters and telegrams that came to the Belton home after his death. Along with messages of condolence and deep affection from the state's leading political figures came letters from obscure people he had helped in the years of his active crusade. Children, both colored and white, came from the poor sections of town to the Journal office and to the home to say: "He paid for our books," or "He bought us shoes so we could go to school in winter," or, "He gave our mother a coat so she could go to work."

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these..."

CONCLUSION

What is required of a leader in a crusade? Sympathy for those who are in need of assistance, understanding of their problems, a keen desire to help humanity, knowledge of organization, qualities of leadership, breadth of vision, tolerance, and unselfishness.

If Owen Pinkney Pyle entered upon his personal crusade for the farmer without any of these requirements, he soon mastered them. Sympathy and understanding he had in abundance. They welled up out of the memories of his childhood, and he was acutely conscious of the need for action as he looked about him. He knew from his own observations as a young man the frustrations and heart-ache the farmer harvested along with his crop, and the stark tragedy that beseiged the family of a small farmer when a crop failed. Pyle had ample opportunity to observe the evil machinations of the credit system and he had intelligence and initiative to figure a way the average farmer could beat the system.

From his experience in the Farmers' Alliance, Pyle learned much about organization from the democratic local level to the federated national level. Knowing well the individualistic, suspicious, defensive attitude of most of the small farmers of his time, he saw that they must be bound together in a unity of brotherhood and constantly reminded of

the necessity to work together. Co-operation was his watchword. The application of hard-headed business methods to farm operations was, in his opinion, vitally necessary if the farmer was ever to regain his rightful place in the country's economy.

Herein lies the significance of the convictions that crystalized in Pyle's thinking during the fading years of the Alliance. For a generation the tone of farmer movements had been protest against the changing economy. The farmer's voice was the voice of the downtrodden little man demanding that the government change its monetary policy, that the government use the whip-hand on big corporations, that the government set up sub-treasury warehouses, all with the purpose of helping the farmer protect himself against the banker, the manufacturer, or the railroad corporation. With the beginning of the new century, Pyle was ready with a new, "do-it-yourself" philosophy to impart to the farmer. "Look about you," he said, in essence. "See how the big corporations make their millions. They don't let some one else set the price they receive for their manufactured articles or their services. They don't sit and wait for the market to come to them. They don't sell their year's production at once at a reduced price because they can't afford to wait for more favorable selling conditions. Why shouldn't the cotton farmers, for example, work together, as one big corporation--plan the amount of acreage according to world demands and plant no more than that, build

warehouses and store their bales until such time as the buyers must meet the producer's price? We have outgrown the day of protest; now is the time to co-operate as businessmen, to set our own prices and create our own marketing conditions. And what is the first necessity for this? A nation-wide organization of the producers, within the framework of which the producers of separate commodities can regulate their own pricing and marketing."

Pyle saw in the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union the answer to this need. He worked toward this end from the beginning of his association with Newt Gresham, and his newspaper was the most effective bond that held the members to their acreage and price agreements. He instigated the organization of the Texas Union, he fired prospective members with enthusiasm across state after state, and he was the prime mover in organizing the National Union. In the Farmers' Co-operative Congress in October, 1906, he saw the fruition of his dream, for there businessmen-farmers struck the first blow for minimum prices and planned marketing on a nation-wide scale--not by government order and regulation, but on a strictly independent basis.

With his broad vision, this farmer-editor converted thousands to his practical ideas, using his talent for speaking and writing, his gift for making and keeping friends, and his acumen in developing the National Co-Operator into the

great propaganda medium it became. It was chiefly his vital, dynamic personality and prodigal spending of talent and energy that turned the Union from petty local clubs into a great national movement.

If Pyle had not been so tolerant of other men's weaknesses and so unselfish in his service to the Union, he could have summarily deposed his critics at each step in the Union's advance, but he placed the Union's well-being above his own ego-satisfaction. He knew the mind of the "dirt farmer." He went into his crusade knowing the calculated risk of leading this type of mind. He undertook his crusade not for self-aggrandizement but for humanitarian principles. It is unfortunate that he was so easily blinded to the faults of pretended friends and that he would not defend himself against the perfidy of little minds. But that was his nature. As he said in his letter after being elected president of the National Union:

> I shall go straight ahead with this work as I have done, only wanting to be judged by my work, for "we are only remembered by what we have done." Though abuse may be heaped upon me, though I may be misrepresented, as I have been many times for many years, and especially for the past year, I shall go forward with only one purpose in view, that of building this, the greatest of all industrial institutions. I shall devote myself to it entirely, and, if giving my life for it, and my every thought to its advancement, is a proper compensation for the confidence my friends have in me, they shall be repaid.

"Colonel Pyle," as the city dailies called him, very nearly gave his life for the Farmers' Union. He wore down his vitality in the service of the cause and he literally lost a year of his life and his financial independence due to the treachery of supposed Union friends. He saw the Texas Union decline and pass into inactivity under the inept leadership of those who had attacked him; but he never regretted an hour of the time he devoted to the cause and he counted among his real accomplishments the discovery and sponsorship of Charles Simon Barrett, who made the National Union the strongest farmers' organization ever known.

In his personal life and in every moment of his crusade he was guided by the shining slogan: "Justice, equity, and the Golden Rule."

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The gathering of material for this thesis has been handicapped by the absence of correspondence or personal papers of its subject due to the destruction of the Belton Journal office by fire in 1913. The files of the Journal in its present office are complete back to 1913 and the Belton Public Library file is almost complete since 1913 and contains a few copies for 1912 and 1913. There are no files of the Mineola Courier or the Progressive Farmer extant. The Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas has about thirty random copies of the National Co-Operator. A more nearly complete file of this paper was in the Texas State Archives but it was lost by the Records Division of the Texas State Library immediately after this writer's first, cursory examination of it, before adequate notes could be taken.

The early records of the Farmers' Union were destroyed by fire in 1903 and Newt Gresham's personal papers were destroyed by fire in Abilene in 1926. One of Charles S. Barrett's sons informed the writer of the presence of papers and correspondence left by his father, but the member of the family in whose possession they were alleged to be denied the report. The papers of the Farmers' Union presidents were not accumulated prior to 1940.

The best sources for Union history are, of course, Robert Lee Hunt's book, Farmer Movements, and Charles S. Barrett's book, Mission, History and Times. For the Alliance-Populist period in Texas, the one, excellent source is Roscoe C. Martin's book, People's Party in Texas, ably supplemented by Ralph A. Smith's articles. Information for the entire period from 1890 to 1909 was taken from newspapers in the University of Texas Newspaper Collection and the Texas State Archives and single files from other sources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Copy of open letter of O. P. Pyle dated January 1, 1906, originally printed in National Co-Operator, reprinted in Texas Farmer, Dallas, Texas, January 20, 1906.

Appendix B - Copy of letter of J. H. (Cyclone) Davis to O. P. Pyle, dated January 6, 1914, printed in Belton Journal, Belton, Texas, January 15, 1914.

Appendix C - Photostat copy of first editorial page (page 8), National Co-Operator, October 31, 1906. Note editorial entitled "The Cowardly Power."

Appendix D - Photostat copy of front page, National Co-Operator, January 15, 1908.

APPENDIX A

OUR MANY THANKS

(Reprint from National Co-Operator)

Mineola, Texas, Jan. 1, 1906. Since my election as president of the Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union of America, at Texarkana, December 9, 1905, I have received so many telegrams and letters of congratulations from my friends in all the States where the Farmers Union has been planted that it is absolutely impossible for me to write each a personal letter in reply. I undertook at first to write each a personal letter, but found it impossible. I take this method of thanking all my friends for their nice words of congratulation, and, if I can ever find the time, I shall be pleased to write each a personal letter. Better still, I should like to meet each one personally and have a heart-to-heart talk about this great industrial business organization of ours. I appreciate the great compliment bestowed upon me in electing me to the head of this, the greatest farmers' organization the world has ever known, far more than I am able to express. I only hope and pray that I may be able to properly discharge the duties of this great office and to meet fully the expectations of my friends, I ask the co-operation of my friends and feel that I know I will have your co-operation at all times. I know you will help me to bear the great burden you have placed upon me. Friends, you have placed this great burden upon me without any solicitation from me whatever. I repeatedly told you that I would accept this great office only on condition that it should come to me in the proper way--without my saying a word or doing anything looking toward my election. My idea of electing officers in the Farmers Union has always been that there are none of us too big to accept the smallest office in the Union if it should come in the proper way, and there are none of us big enough to accept the smallest office if obtained by scheming and the methods of the politician.

I steadfastly refused to go into any caucus whatever, and did nothing looking toward my election. The fact is, I had grave fears that it was not best for me personally, nor for our great organization for me to be made its chief, and so informed many of my friends, who were anxious that I be elected. My friends thought differently. A great number of my friends have asked me to write something of my early life and to tell in what I have been engaged. This I have consented to do:

I was born in the good old State of Arkansas, in Franklin County, near Ozark, December 13, 1867. My parents moved to Texas in the winter of 1874 in wagons. Our family was a large one and we were very, very poor. My father rented land near Ladonia, Fannin County, Texas, on which we lived the first three years after we came. There were eleven of us in the family and we all worked. My mother and my sisters worked in the field, which made a deep and lasting impression on my youthful mind. I never thought they should work in the field, but our condition was such that they were forced to do so. In early youth I decided to devote my life to the cause of the producer, and never cease my labors till we have a just system of distribution. Every time I think about how my mother, sick and tired, bended over the cotton rows, picking cotton, I resolve anew to continue this great fight for the emancipation of the toiling millions. I will stay in the fight to the last, whether at the head or at the foot of the class. I began picking cotton when four years old, and stayed with my job well, as my father, brothers and sisters will testify, (my mother died in 1879). At the age of seven I went between the plow handles and "stayed there" until I was twenty-six years old. In the fall of 1877 my father moved to Hunt County. We lived the first year on a rented place near Caddo Mills. The next year my father bought land seven miles west of Greenville, for which we finally succeeded in paying. That was my first real home. Here I lived until I was twenty years old, when I moved to this Wood County. I got what

education I could by going to school from two to three months each winter, except two. One of these I had to work, and the other I had inflammatory rheumatism and could not attend. I did the very best I could under the circumstances toward getting an education, and began teaching school in the community in which I was principally raised at Clinton, Hunt County, Texas, at the age of eighteen. I taught in the winter and made a crop in the spring and summer. In the fall of 1888 I came to this county, where I continued to teach and farm till the fall of 1894, when the Farmers' Alliance of this county put me in charge of the Mineola Courier, a paper owned by the Farmers' Alliance of this county. I was chosen by the farmers of my county more than eleven years ago to represent them and to work for them. My greatest joy is in the thought that not a farmer in my county can be induced to say that I have been recreant to the trust of eleven consecutive years. If a man who was taken from off the farm one year ago is yet a farmer, why is it that I am not yet a farmer, after more than eleven years of labor for the farmers by their choosing, and in all of which time I have been actually and actively engaged in agriculture.

Since the organization of the Farmers' Union all have known of my work. "By their fruits ye shall know them." I shall go straight ahead with this work as I have done, only wanting to be judged by my work, for "we are only remembered by what we have done." Though abuse may be heaped upon me, though I may be misrepresented, as I have been many times for many years, and especially for the past year, I shall go forward with only one purpose in view, that of building this, the greatest of all industrial institutions. I shall devote myself to it entirely, and, if giving my life for it, and my every thought to its advancement, is a proper compensation for the confidence my friends have in me, they shall be repaid.

I am fraternally,

O. P. Pyle

APPENDIX B

Sulphur Springs, Texas
January 6, 1914

Friend Pyle:

I got The Journal with your notice of me in it. [Davis had announced his candidacy for congressman-at-large.] Thanks for the compliments, though left-handed in a way, they and the spirit that is conveyed are appreciated. We old Pops have been the salt of the earth. Since Wilson came out for government ownership of railroads in Alaska, and Burleson came out for government ownership of telephone and telegraph systems, no one who has suffered untold persecutions for their faith as I have, can appreciate the gladness of my heart. There are five of us lawyers who met the delegates of the National Grange, Alliance and Knights of Labor in Cincinnatti in 1891. I am the only one now living. I was honored by the meeting; I helped make the platform. We put forth about fifteen distinct and then radical propositions: The Initiative Referendum and Recall, Graduated Income Tax, Government Ownership of Railroads, telegraphs, telephones, strict regulation and a physical valuation by the government until taken over. Rigid stock and bond laws, public ownership of all public utilities, radical reform in all our land laws, forbidding the holding of land for speculative purposes; forbid alien ownership; forbid corporate ownership, except as used and occupied in active service; laid down the basis of all just title to land being "use and occupation;" we laid down the quantitative theory of money and called for government issue and control and that it go direct to the people on productive industry, public improvements and to the farmer through a warehouse system. These issues, and our labors, have rent both old parties asunder and put them into warring factions; made Wilson president and Roosevelt a close second. Every proposition that has not been

accepted in full is now pending and is acute at every angle. We were denounced as "agitators, demagogues, imbeciles, and anarchists;" "lazy Lazaronis, too lazy to work, too cowardly to steal" and hence wanted to "confiscate the honest wealth of the country", wanted to "whack up and divide among the tramps and vagrants that made up the bulk of our crowd." Under the lash of all these scornful terms hurled at me in a thousand debates as national committeeman, for over six years I carried the banner of their defense, never faltering under the scorn continually and approbium [sic] heaped upon me. I may be pardoned for thanking God that I have lived to see the millions of the men in both the old parties now my friends, and most of the platform put into law; I have seen the day of our triumph. I sincerely wish that General Weaver of Iowa, Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, and S. F. Norton of Ohio, could step back to earth and join me in a call to the leaders of the Grange, the Alliance and the Knights of Labor and let us all hold a National thanksgiving. I may never hold any office, have but little desire for the honors of office in any way, but have invested so much of my life in the issues named above that I can not now abate the effort in their defense.

I send you herein copy of a speech I made at Nacogdoches Fair last fall and a letter to Senator Owen on the money question. Note the proposition to make the full grown corporation a soldier in time of war same as the full grown man. The corporation is "a man in law," does everything except fight for its country and it should be made to do that. I am now seriously thinking of making the race for Congressman-at-large, in order to keep these issues acute before the people and assist in their promotion at Washington. With men like Wilson, Bryan, Burleson, Bob Henry and a score of others like them in the lead of the Democratic party, and LaFollette, Roosevelt, et al, goading the republican party into the progressive and

modern ideas of Democracy, I look for a great advance in the liberty and prosperity of our people and the glory of our Republic.

Consider me as ever,

Your friend,

J. H. Davis[1]

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[1]Belton Journal, January 15, 1914. This letter is quoted in full because of Davis' analysis of Populist accomplishments, and because such letters are probably rare. According to Marshall Williams, author of an unpublished thesis, "The Political Career of Cyclone Davis" (East Texas State Teachers College, 1937), when he talked with Davis "he had no personal papers." (Letter to the writer, February 15, 1958.) A member of Davis' family gave the writer the same information in Sulphur Springs, June 8, 1957.

THE NATIONAL CO-OPERATOR

O. P. PYLE,
Editor and Proprietor.

Published Weekly Every Wednesday, 367 Commerce St., Dallas, Texas.

Terms of subscription, one dollar a year, in advance.

Application made for entry at Post-office, Dallas, Texas, as second class mail matter.

Advertising rates will be furnished on application.

The Home is the hope of the Nation. When every family owns a home free from mortgage, then in deed will we have a prosperous country. To own a home is a duty every man owes himself, his family and his country.

THE NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE FARMERS' CONGRESS.

What was in many respects, admitted by all, the greatest gathering of farmers, was held last week in Topeka, Kan. Twenty States were represented. It was the first meeting of the National Farmers' Co-operative Congress. The congress was called by James Butler of Topeka, Kansas, who is a pioneer Co-operator who has spent much time and money to further the cause of co-operation, and is one of the leading co-operators of the nation.

Chas. S. Barrett of Atlanta, Ga., president of the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America, was chosen president of the congress. N. C. Murray of Kingston, Texas, former president of the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America, was chosen secretary. Both these gentlemen were elected by acclamation amid much enthusiasm, and performed their duties to the entire satisfaction of all.

This great meeting had for its one great object the bringing together of all farmer organizations into one—into the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America, and for the purpose of giving impetus to the movement in the North and West. That it did much good in this direction, was plainly evident. Delegates from many States had scarcely heard of the Farmers' Union before. They were greatly surprised to learn of the great numbers of this organization in the South, who are willing and ready to co-operate with their brother producers of the North and West. The effect will be the speedy organization of these States into the Farmers' Union. Indeed, we need not be surprised if this great organization sweeps over the North and West faster than it did over the South.

This great organization is to be national, in fact as well as name.

The very best of feeling prevailed throughout the entire three days of this great meeting. While it was purely a business meeting, yet, it partook of the nature, in many respects, of a religious meeting. It was one continual love feast from beginning to end, and, when finally its labors were over, the congress did not want to adjourn. No one wanted to say goodbye.

As old-time friends, and new-made friends took final leave of each other, it was a great scene. The greatest we have ever witnessed. Never before have we seen such expressions of love and confidence. It shows that the producers of this country are to be brethren, indeed and in truth, and that this great work so well begun will go on and on till the producers will have that perfect understanding which will lead to the freedom of the race.

THE COWARDLY POWER.

Like all the gambling schemes that are running rampant in these United States, the system of fictitious buying and selling futures in agricultural products is wholly unfair to farmers, and the organized gamblers who have assumed such functions are cowards, by seeking and maintaining the advantage. It is a game altogether in favor of the organized speculators, and they maintain this advantage by secret organization, by secret word phrases, by private wires, by the manipulation of the money power and the railroad combines; in fact, they own the boards of trade, national exchanges, bucket shops, and thus organized they have usurped the powers of national and international trade, and make future contracts to deliver products that they never produced or never expect to see or handle. The whole system is contemptible—an illegitimate barter and traffic in the means of life—the products of the greatest and most important class—the farmers.

Does it not occur to you that the subtle power that forces the farmers to patronize such a business, or have no market whatever, is cowardly, deserving no credit for brains or courage, and more than a modern highwayman who holds up a poor cripple at the muzzle of a six-shooter and robs him?

What must be the quality of the courage of the farmer who stands back and refuses to assist in throwing off the cowardly curs of commercialism who have fastened their rabid mouths upon the throats of helpless women and children on the farm and threaten the industrial life of the nation?

The farmer who falters is a coward, the one who dallies is a dastard, and he who doubts is damned.

The farmers, the most majestic producers of the nation, are called to arms, not with sword or bayonet, cannon shot or rifle ball; but armed with the sword of equity, and the bayonet of truth, the bombs of unity and guns of loyalty, the outraged farmers will march in solid phalanx, and storm the fortress of the organized plunderers, and win their freedom and independence over the gambling hordes.

UNCERTAIN PRICES.

No other business of the country is enshrouded in doubt and uncertainty like the farmers. No other commodity is toyed with by gamblers as the farmers, and no other business would submit for a single day to be made the victims of unscrupulous speculators.

Suppose the daily papers should announce "that May harvesters are twenty points off, July threshing machines have declined, December overcoats had suffered a severe slump, and that pettycoats had taken a decided 'bear' movement." Do you suppose that any regular business of the country would stand for such foolishness? No; but they all expect the poor old farmers to remain in survility to gambling boards and rings.

The Farmers' Union has grappled with this class of exploiters, and they are determined to throw off the curse. The motto is: "Loyal farmers to the front, and cowards and traitors to the rear."

There is a greater and a more genuine demand for the farmers' crops than for any other commodity in the world. All human beings and domestic animals must be fed by the farmers. Is there any reason on earth why farmers should sell at low and uncertain prices, only the miserable system of street traffic that prevails, by which the farmers peddle out their fine crops to organized speculators and gamblers? We must break down the present method of marketing and build a machine of marketing owned and controlled by the farmers themselves.

THE MINIMUM PRICE.

The minimum price on farm crops, corresponds to the pop valve on the boiler. The engineer fires up and gradually the steam pressure rises until the pop valve pops off. The steam pressure has reached the limit and the engineer ceases to put in the coal and the wood.

The farmers pop valve must be underneath, and is known as the "minimum price." When the market reaches a point below the "minimum price," every farmer should stop selling at once, for they have reached the danger line.

To continue to dump the crops on a falling market only sends the price downward, just as the wood and the coal thrown ninto the furnace runs the steam pressure above the danger point.

The proposition of the Farmers' Union is a sound one. Establish the standard gauge price, below which no farmer should sell, then adopt the rule to sell when you get your price and stop the very moment the price goes below.

This idea must be made uniform, and all farmers must have the same price before them all over the country.

If any farmer in these United States, especially if he is a member of the Farmers' Union, doubts the propriety, the absolute necessity, indeed, for organization on the part of the agricultural classes, for self-protection, the latest news from Chicago ought to dispel that doubt.

Farmers, read the following and ask yourselves what this country is coming to, what your fate will be if you do not adhere with mind, body, heart and soul, to the principles and every movement of the Farmers' Union.

The news is current in financial circles, was the sensation of the hour Saturday last in Chicago of the combination of the six big packing houses of that city into one gigantic concern with $500,000,000 capital, to control the packing interests of the world, just as the United States Steel corporation steal, guides, controls and appropriates the profits of the iron and steel industry of this country.

The six big packing companies alleged to be parties to this huge syndicate for spoliation are Swift & Co., with a capital of $50,000,000; Nelson Morris & Co., $30,000,000; Armour & Co., $20,000,000; National Packing Company, $15,000,000, and Cudahy & Co., $10,000,000. This is a total of $135,000,000. The remainder, $365,000,000, of the $500,000,000 is to be put in by an English holding company, and the business is to be controlled from London. Sir Thomas Lipton, the London merchant, who has been running yacht races in this country, has been in Chicago for some time, engineering the merger and organization of the new company, according to Chicago Exchange information. Sir Thomas Lipton was engaged in the packing business in Chicago up to last year, when he sold out, but still owns large corporate interests in the Windy City.

The English have just threatened to come over to this country, buy up Southern vacant lands and drive the Southern cotton planter out of business by raising cotton and underselling him, if the Farmers' Union does not stop its efforts to control the prices of the farm products of its members. Should they do this, they will then turn their attention to the grain crops—in fact, to all other crops, and make the American farmer a serf for life, to further enrich the English nobility and moneyed aristocracy, along with the aping horde of our own grain, cotton and produce exchanges.

It is up to the farmer folk to slay this monster of English arrogance and presumption, furthered, fostered, aided and abetted by the insolence and the graft of our home speculators and greed mongers. There is but one way possible to do this and that is by organization—intelligent, compact organization, an organization that will stand for its rights, for the purposes it has in view as firmly as Gibraltar stands against the storms and hurri-

Southern Mercury

United With

The National Co-Operator and Farm Journal

THE NATIONAL CO-OPERATOR AND FARM JOURNAL

The KING of the WORLD — The HOME is the HOPE of the NATION

Farmers Union Password

United With

The National Co-Operator and Farm Journal

Volume 29. DALLAS, TEXAS, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15, 1908. Number 14.

The Plan Texas Presents Of Secrecy And Sliding Scale.

The Conference of Farmers' Union delegates at Memphis on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, January 7, 8 and 9, did some most important business, but one of the most important things done in Memphis was the adoption by the Texas delegates in a meeting of their own of a plan that in the future the prices fixed by the National Union on farm products ought to be secret, only those members of the Union entitled to the knowing the password, to know what this price is. The minimum, according to this plan, would be fixed below which no farm product is to be sold by any Union member, and there would be a sliding scale above the minimum, that may be a small increase, or quite a radical one, according to circumstances, and this scale may go up or down daily, but never below the minimum fixed and the minimum would go up regularly monthly, a little, to cover warehouse and insurance expenses.

How does this proposition present itself to you? It looks good to us, since we consider it to be just, reasonable and practicable. In the first place it is wise and prudent to keep our affairs to ourselves absolutely. Our business is our own, and we must remember that we are a strictly business organization, our sole purpose and aim being to do business, and business ways. You may take any association, any union, any character or description of organization, whether it be for business purposes, social, educational, charitable, philanthropic or whatsoever it may be for, its members concerns its affairs pertaining directly to itself, it keeps to itself, discusses them in executive session, that is, behind closed doors, just as we do in our Local Unions, in our District and County Unions, in the State Unions and in the National Union. Not a soul knows or knowingly will know all the questions considered and discussed at the Memphis Conference, nor all the agreements entered into at that conference, all the plans laid, nor the methods devised by which to accomplish the various ends or measures agreed upon at that conference for the good of the Union. A press committee was sent out to the newspapers for publication that all the world might know the outlines of certain propositions that it was well enough for all the world to know, but all things were not told, nor were the details of the proposition given out. This was right, was just to ourselves, and was just to ourselves was not unjust to the balance of the world. When the Standard Oil Company's Directors meet they do not scatter broadcast throughout the universe the proceedings of their meetings. Is there a man being on the face of the earth who knows the Standard Oil Company price of oil? There is not a member of The Farmers' Union today who can tell. There is not a wholesale or retail merchant who today can tell. A purchaser of a carload of oil may be able to tell what he paid for the carload, but he does not know what his next-door neighbor, in the same line of business, paid for it. When you purchase a can or a gallon of oil from your merchant, do you know what he paid for it when he bought it? Do you know at what price he sells every can or gallon he sells? Of course you do not. Ought we not to pursue the same business policies and manage our affairs with the same prudence, foresight and shrewdness that the Standard Oil Company, the most successful and therefore the richest and most powerful business organization the world has ever known, uses, or that our immediate merchants use? It seems to Co-Operator that this is the plain, common-sense, common justice way of attending to our business, that we may the better be able to defend ourselves against our enemies, the class of individuals who have so long preyed upon us and appropriated to themselves, by unhallowed schemes and injurious combinations, our subsistance.

With the minimum prices of our products known only to our members in good standing, those entitled to and possessing the password, a splendid effect will result. It will make those members who have been slow in paying their dues paid up, more prompt in this respect, and it will be effective to bring into the Union non-union farmers, that class especially in sympathize with our Union movement, and who have been standing out in holding their cotton for the Union price, and thereby largely increase our members, giving us greater force, strength and power to win in the great struggle for justice, for honesty, for truth, for prosperity, for betterment and uplifting of all the agricultural classes, thereby bettering and uplifting every class in all our country and making our Nation a better, stronger, better Nation.

We are a business organization, and those not banded with us in this organization are neither part nor parcel of us, no matter what their calling may be. The farmer outside the Union is no more a part of us, or entitled to knowledge of our affairs, or participation in our business, than the banker or merchant who is ineligible to membership, for he who is not of us is for us is against us. A house cannot be divided against itself, and the farmer who is not within the Union fold is not entitled to any Union secrets. So much for the secrecy feature of the scheme or proposition.

As to the sliding scale. Who can object to that? Is it feasible, practicable? Is it just and honest? Co-Operator thinks it is all these things. It is the only way to keep the minimum price secret. If there was no sliding scale, the minute Union cotton was sold from a Union warehouse, the buyer would know what the minimum price was. With the sliding scale uninformed, that is to say, no one but the Union man with the password, could know whether it was sold at figures above the minimum or not. That is one advantage of the scale.

Another advantage will be the ability it will afford to avail ourselves of the fluctuations of the market, for the markets for products fluctuate the same as do other markets. The law of supply and demand is imperious and will control. Now do not think that Co-Operator is reversing itself, or changing its position so many times expressed and maintained on this question of the law of supply and demand. Co-Operator has always contended and does so still, that no cotton crop has ever been raised or can be produced on the acreage of land now in cultivation too large to supply the needs of the world for cotton and cotton products. Our idea of supply and demand as above referred to is simply this: It takes nearly a year to produce a cotton crop, and it ought to take somewhere about the same length of time to sell it, but when it is rushed on the market and dumped at any price offered, then the supply (on the market) is greater than the demand (of the market). This is the supply and demand it is intended for the scaling price to be able to avail itself of. When the dumpers overcrowd the market, and prices drop below the minimum figures, Union cotton stays in the warehouses. When the prices go up to the minimum figures, or above, Union cotton is on the market and the result will be, especially after September every year, that in nearly every case Union cotton in the warehouses will fetch more than the minimum price, and what applies to Union cotton will apply to Union grain in Union elevators, and Union truck in Union cold storages. With this system in effect, and it surely ought to be put into effect, all the world will look on with admiration, and with respect for us. The grafter and spoliator would see that the day of his passing has come and that there is no more picking for them in the cotton fields of the South, in the grain fields of the West, in the orchards and vineyards and truck fields—in any agricultural enterprise anywhere in all the land, and he would gnash his teeth and swear, but he will respect us and admire us in his heart, and mind, and congratulate us that we have at last awakened and gone to doing business in a practical, sensible, business way.

HENRY E. WEBB.

The Plow Boy Orator of the Plains of Texas.

Bro. Webb, for his age, is an old-timer. He was a member of the 'Agricultural' Wheel, The Farmers' Alliance, and is now a prominent and trusted member of The Farmers' Union. He was a delegate to the late National meeting at Memphis, and took a prominent part in its proceedings. He is faithful and true, and the good people of Baylor County make no mistake in making him their delegate to these important meetings. As an orator, he stands right up at the head of the list. He has done much work for the cause in the past and will do even more in the future.

What is there or can there be of injustice in this plan? Nothing that Co-Operator can conceive of, or even imagine. Is there any business concern in these modern days that lets the market—the trade—fix the price? The Standard Oil Company does not do so. The United States Steel Association does not do so. The great meat packing establishments do not do so. The railroad companies do not do so. But this system would secure our own price. This is certainly just and whatever is just is honest and honorable. It would be within the pale of the law—not by jugglery, or subterfuge, but openly, squarely, fully, unreservedly, and strictly within the pale of the law in its every provision and injunction, mandate and inhibition. That is the kind of trust The Farmers' Union would be. An open and above-board, and just prices for farm products of every character the various soils and climates of the United States will grow, and doing it absolutely without conflict with [illegible], but in accordance with and in maintenance of the law. Not [illegible]t of trade, but in the furtherance, development and growth of trade.

Now, would all this under this plan be easily done? Would it take a complicated and extensive system of machinery for the operation of this plan? By no means. We have the system fairly well established already. We now have more than 1,500 warehouses for our cotton in the Southern States, and grain growers of the Northwest for some time have had their elevators, and we continue the development and strengthening of this system, [illegible] States, where alone of all the earth the great white staple grows, build warehouses enough by September first, this good year 1908, in each county in each Southern State, to store the Union cotton grown in that country. There may be some counties where the Union membership will not be able to build as many warehouses as they will really need, but they must build just as many in number, and as great in size, toward the requisite number as they possibly can, using every means and making every feasible and practicable effort they can compass, to accomplish their ends.

"Warehouses" is the slogan, the watchword from now on, especially from now until September next, throughout the entire South. Keep building them, and getting them ready for this year's crop. And that is not all. To perfect and carry into full operation and successful accomplishment, our purposes, every Union man must put his cotton in his warehouse and keep it there for the minimum price, whatever that may be for the cotton crop grown this year of 1908, be it a small or a large crop. Of course, there will be some Union "diseress" cotton, but you know the Local Unions in their meetings held on December 7th, last year, adopted resolutions to provide the means for taking care of the "distress" cotton of its members, so to live squarely up to Union principles and to fully protect themselves, each Local must look after this matter and do what it is expected to do—see to it that not one of its members shall be forced to "dump" his cotton for any old price he may be offered. The protection to be given is to help a brother lift any mortgage he may have had to give, or pay any debt he was compelled to create that, being due, may endanger his cotton. With these plans fully carried out what is there to prevent us having cover for our cotton, a safe place for its keeping, and what is to prevent us from holding it, especially when you have pursued the wise policy this year of raising your forage and feed stuffs at home?

The next question is the disposal of the cotton after it has been stored. The Conference at Memphis, in its actions contemplated the establishment of a central warehouse in each State, or perhaps, where conditions may require, a central warehouse for different sections of a State, this being entirely optional with the State Union. This central warehouse is to be in close touch with the interior warehouses, being kept informed as to the number of bales on hand of each grade of cotton, etc. It is not necessary here to attempt to give details as to the management of the central warehouse and its connection or operations in connection with the interior or local warehouses. Those details will be worked out and established by the proper authority in each State, or section of a State, as the case may be.

Now, this warehouse system is one of the most important, indeed, the vital feature of the great work accomplished by the Memphis Conference. It goes without saying that these local warehouses and the central warehouse are Farmers' Union warehouses, built by, owned by and opterated by Farmers' Union members, no outsiders owning any stock or having a word to say, yea or nay, in the control or management of any warehouse. And that is not all. THESE WAREHOUSES ARE INTENDED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE COTTON OF FARMERS' UNION MEMBERS, therefore, the local warehouses must be owned by the members of Local Unions exclusively. This is the idea. We have built and will build warehouses for our own purposes and uses, and as the potential factor, the irresistible power and force in our great plan of self-protection for ourselves AND NOT FOR ANYONE ELSE. Do you see the point? If we are a trust, we are a trust for our own benefit, not for the benefit of other people.